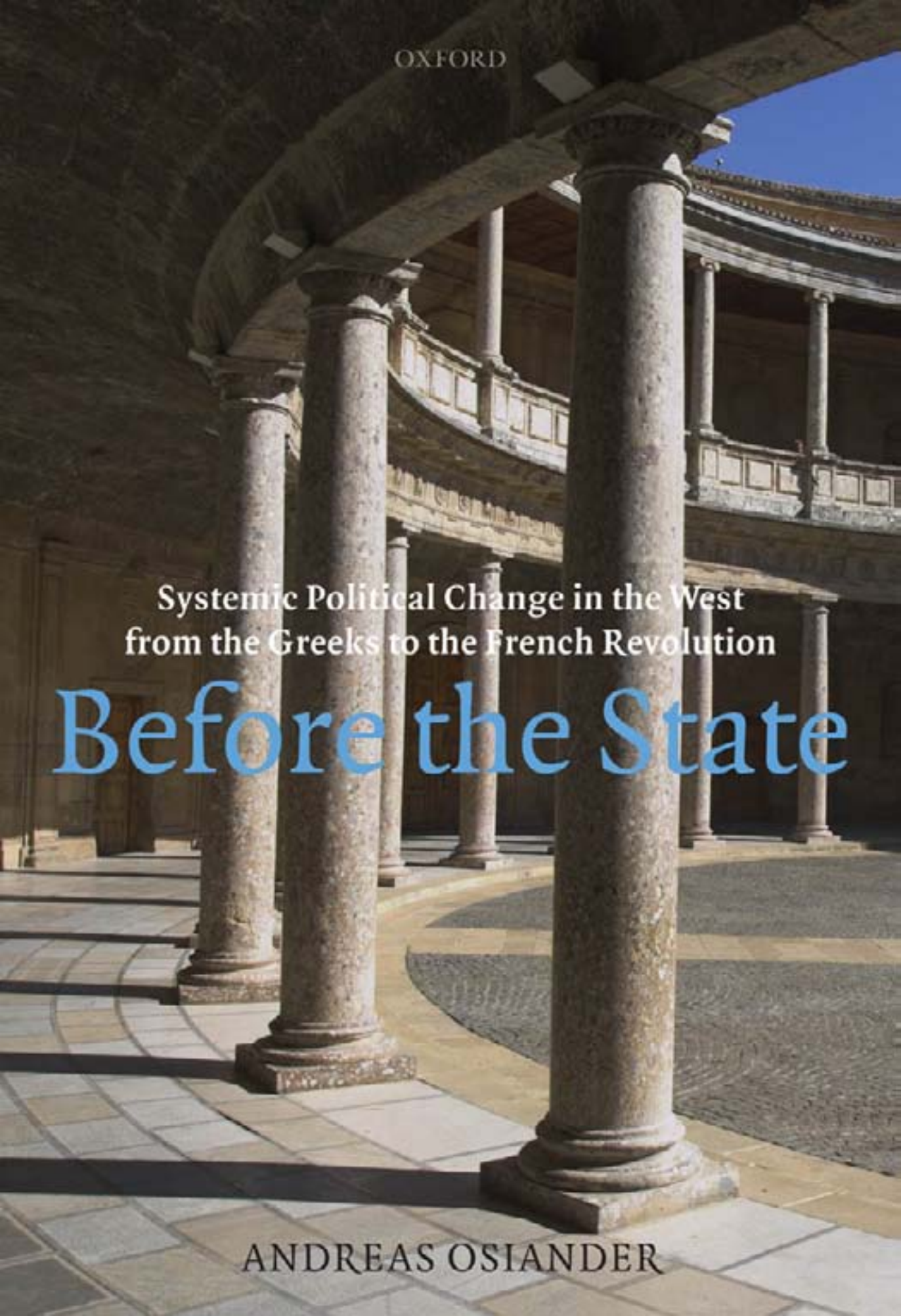
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Systemic Political Change in the West
from the Greeks to the French Revolution
Before the State
ANDREAS OSIANDER

BEFORE THE STATE

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Before the State: Systemic Political Change in the West from the Greeks to the French Revolution

Andreas Osiander

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

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Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2 6DP

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship,
and education by publishing worldwide in

Oxford New York

Auckland Cape Town Dar es Salaam Hong Kong Karachi
Kuala Lumpur Madrid Melbourne Mexico City Nairobi
New Delhi Shanghai Taipei Toronto

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Published in the United States
by Oxford University Press Inc., New York

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First published 2007

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Data available

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Data available

Typeset by SPI Publisher Services, Pondicherry, India
Printed in Great Britain
on acid-free paper by
Biddles Ltd., King's Lynn, Norfolk

ISBN 978–0–19–829451–1

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

Τὰ μὲν οὖν παλαιὰ τοιαῦτα ηὗρον, χαλεπὰ ὄντα παντὶ ἑξῆς τεκμηρίῳ πιστεῦσαι. οἱ γὰρ ἄνθρωποι τὰς ἀκοὰς τῶν προγεγενημένων, καὶ ἢν ἐπιχώρια σφίσιν ᾖ, ὁμοίως ἀβασανίστως παρ᾽ ἀλλήλων δέχονται. . . . οὕτως ἀταλαίπωρος τοῖς πολλοῖς ἡ ζήτησις τῆς ἀληθείας καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ ἑτοῖμα μᾶλλον τρέπονται.

Ta men oun palaiá toiaúta hêúron, chalepá ónta pantí hexẽ́s tekmêríô$_i$ pisteúsai. hoi gar ánthrôpoi tas akoás tôn progegenêménôn, kai ên epichṓria sphísin ê$_i$, homoíôs abasanístôs par'allḗlôn déchontai. . . . houtôs atalaípôros tois polloís hê zḗtesis tês alêtheías kai epí ta hetoíma mállon trépontai.

So this is what I found the past to have been like, it being ill-advised simply to trust whatever testimony one comes across. For men accept from one another hearsay about history, without examining it even where their own country is concerned. . . . That is how indifferent most people are to finding out the truth, preferring as they do to turn to what is ready-made.

Thukydídês (1.20)

[*Man muß*] *die Geschichte lassen, wie sie ist, sich nicht . . . ein gewißes historisches Lehrgebäude in den Kopf sezen und die Historie darnach drehen.*

[One must] leave the past as it is, not . . . get into one's head some doctrinal edifice about history and twist history to fit it.

Johann Jacob Moser (1766: 538)

If there is indeed a hidden reality of political power, a first step towards discovering it might be a resolute refusal to accept the legitimating account of it that political theorists and political actors so invitingly and ubiquitously hold out to us—that is, the idea that it is 'the state'. . . . The state is not the reality which stands behind the mask of political practice. It is itself the mask which prevents our seeing political practice as it is.

Philip Abrams (1988: 63–4, 82)

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Acknowledgements

My first duty is to thank Professor Michael Kreile of the Humboldt University, Berlin, Germany. He made this project possible to begin with by creating the excellent working conditions in which I was able to undertake much of my initial research, and by providing unfaltering and manifold support as a friend throughout the long genesis of this book.

I must likewise thank Professor Randall Lesaffer of the University of Tilburg, the Netherlands, for affording me the opportunity to do further research in a very companionable environment, for which I am grateful also to everybody else at the Tilburg Institute of Legal History.

Finally I am indebted to Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft for generously supporting this project with a two-year research grant.

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Greek transliteration table

In this book words or passages in the Greek language are rendered with Latin letters in accordance with the table below.

Greek	Transliteration	Pronunciation (Attic)	Pronunciation (At present)
Α, α (álpha)	a	[a], [a:]	[a]
Β, β (bêta)	b	[b]	[v]
Γ, γ (gámma)	g	[g]	[ɣ], [ʝ]$^{(*}$
Δ, δ (délta)	d	[d]	[ð]
Ε, ε (e psilón)	e	[e]	[e]
Ζ, ζ (zêta)	z	[zd]	[z]
Η, η (êta)	ê	[ɛ:]	[i]
Θ, θ (thêta)	th	[t^{h}]	[θ]
Ι, ι (iôta)	i	[i], [i:]	[i], [j]
Κ, κ (káppa)	k	[k]	[k]
Λ, λ (lámbda)	l	[l]	[l]
Μ, μ (my)	m	[m]	[m]
Ν, ν (ny)	n	[n]	[n]
Ξ, ξ (ksi)	x	[ks]	[ks]
Ο, o (o mikrón)	o	[o]	[o]
Π, π (pi)	p	[p]	[p]
Ρ, ρ (rhô)	rh$^{(+}$, r	[rh, r]	[r]
Σ/C, $\sigma/\varsigma^{(++}$ (sígma)	s	[s]	[s]
Τ, τ (tau)	t	[t]	[t]
Υ, υ (y psilón)	y	[y], [y:]	[i]
Φ, ϕ (phi)	ph	[p^{h}]	[f]
Χ, χ (chi)	ch	[k^{h}]	[x], [ç]$^{(*}$
Ψ, ψ (psi)	ps	[ps]	[ps]
Ω, ω (ô méga)	ô	[o:]	[o]
$\alpha\iota$	ai	[ai]	[e]
$\alpha\iota^{(+++}$	a$_{i}$	[ai]	[a]
$\alpha\upsilon$	au	[au]	[af], [av]$^{(**}$
$\varepsilon\iota$	ei	[e:]	[i]

(*cont.*)

Greek	Transliteration	Pronunciation (Attic)	Pronunciation (At present)
$\varepsilon\upsilon$	eu	[eu]	[ef], [ev](**
$\eta\iota$(+++	$\hat{\text{e}}_{\text{i}}$	[ɛ:i]	[i]
$\eta\upsilon$	êu	[ɛ:u]	[if], [iv](**
$o\iota$	oi	[oi]	[i]
$o\upsilon$	ou	[u:]	[u]
$\omega\iota$(+++	$\hat{\text{o}}_{\text{i}}$	[o:i]	[o]
$\gamma\gamma$	ng	[ŋg]	[(ŋ)g]
$\gamma\kappa$	nk	[ŋk]	[(ŋ)g]
$\gamma\chi$	nch	[ŋk$^{\text{h}}$]	[ŋx]
’ (psilé [spiritus lenis])	-	(none)	(none)
‘ (daseía [spiritus asper])	h	[h]	(none)

(* Before light vowel. (** Before vowel or voiced consonant.
(+ ‘rh’ at the beginning of words (even if preceded by a prefix). (++ ς at the end of words. (+++ ‘*iótа* subscript’: in Greek script often written underneath the letter preceding it, it is silent both in today’s Greek pronunciation and in the pronunciation of ‘ancient’ Greek usually taught at school (῞Αιδης = ῞Ạ́δης = *Há*$_{\text{i}}$ *dês* = ‘Hades’, the underworld).

Comments on Greek transliteration

The advantage of the transliteration system proposed here is that, contrary to what is normally the case, the original Greek spelling of any Greek words or names remains immediately discernible and need not be guessed at (this, e.g., makes it possible to look up words in a Greek dictionary).

υ (*y psilón*) is rendered as 'y' if it stands on its own, but as 'u' if it is part of a diphthong ('au', 'eu', 'êu', and 'ou'). It would be more consistent to render it as 'u' throughout, as is often done in English texts written by classicists, and even in the case of some Greek words imported into English and in general usage. More commonly, however, Greek words in general English usage render *υ* as 'y' (e.g. 'hubris' but 'hybrid', even though both words share the same stem; 'system' not 'sustem'), and using 'y' makes many Greek words more readily recognizable to the English reader. Moreover, rendering *υ* as 'y' allows rendering the diphthong *ου* as 'u' in proper names used in the English text, likewise facilitating recognition (*Θουκυδίδης* > Thukydídês, where the other system would give us Thoukydídês). Similarly, *χ* is rendered as 'ch' rather than 'kh' as classicists, mindful of the pronunciation in fifth-century Athens, sometimes prefer; again the reason is that 'ch' is the normal rendering in Greek words used in everyday English ('monarchy' not 'monarkhy'). 'h' is only transliterated at the beginning of words and if the first letter of a phoneme is 'r'. If a phoneme that would begin with an 'h' if it appeared in first position is preceded by a prefix, the 'h' disappears, unless the first letter of the phoneme is 'r' (*par-rhêsía*, but *pro-aíresis*, *Pan-éllênes*). A further exception are the prefixes *antí*, *apó*, *epí*, *katá*, *metá*, and *hypó*, whose middle consonant becomes aspirated (i.e. *π* becomes *ϕ* and *τ* becomes *θ*) if it 'meets' an 'h' at the beginning of the phoneme that it precedes, in which case the final vowel of the prefix is elided: *apó* + *híêmi* > *aphíêmi*, *katá* + *haíresis* > *kathaíresis*. As in Greek script, the amalgamation of words of which the first ends and the second begins with a vowel or diphthong is marked by a little hook (*korônís*) above the resulting vowel: *kaloí kȧgathoí* (= *kaloí kai agathoí*).

For simplicity's sake accentuation is in accordance with the 'monotonic' or single-accent system introduced in Greece in 1982. It employs only the acute accent where the older triple-accent system, introduced in the second-century BCE, distinguished the acute accent, the grave accent, and the circumflex accent. This was to help learners of Greek with a pronunciation that traditionally operated with a pitch (musical) accent (as in Swedish or Chinese) but which by that time was already being replaced by a simple

stress accent like that also found in most present-day west European languages, including English. The original distinction of vowel lengths (short and long), which plays a role for the triple-accent system and for the reading of ancient Greek poetry which that system was meant to help with, has also long been abandoned in ordinary Greek pronunciation—though the alphabet, with its distinction of *ε* (e)/*η* (ê) and *o* (o)/*ω* (ô) still reflects it. In the monotonic system employed here, the acute indicates the stressed syllable; words consisting of a single syllable have no accent. Polysyllabic words have a second accent on their final syllable if that is not normally stressed but followed by one of a group of words known as 'enclitic' (these are words, usually of only one syllable though some have two, that have no accent of their own): *prósantés estin*. Monosyllabic words exceptionally take an accent if followed by one of those enclitic words. In the transliteration system proposed here, the circumflex indicates a long vowel, not the position of the stressed syllable.

'Attic' pronunciation in the last column but one means the pronunciation of people in Athens in the fifth-/fourth-century BCE. It was more conservative than that of other Greek dialects, which, for example, no longer had the [h]. Today's pronuncation, given in the last column, was the result of a development largely complete already around 1000 CE, and to a considerable extent as early as the beginning of our era. On this development, see Horrocks (1997).

The treatment of Greek proper names

This is a famously thorny problem. Most authors wash their hands of it, declaring consistency to be impossible in this matter. But there is no reason why Greek proper names should not simply be transliterated from the Greek with the help of some coherent system like that proposed above. Owing to the dead weight of a tradition dating from the time when the language of scholars was Latin, English texts habitually give Greek proper names in their Latinized form. The pronunciation of such names similarly reflects Latin accentuation rules, which frequently results in a different syllable being stressed from the Greek original. Thus we are accustomed to 'Ạttica' instead of Attikḗ, 'Dẹlphi' instead of Delphoí; people will say 'Pẹricles' not Periklḗs. But there is no reason (other than habit) why, in English-language texts, such Latin forms should be preferred to the original Greek names. A different situation exists where names have been Anglicized rather than merely Latinized: such names I retain ('Aristotle', 'Corinth', 'Macedon'). In Anglicized forms containing the diphthong that in Greek would be written *αι* or *οι* I write 'ai'/'oi' rather than the Latinized 'ae'/'oe'; similarly I prefer 'k' to Latinized 'c'—hence, for example, Achaimenid, Mykenian, Phaiaks, Phoinikian, or Seleukid. I likewise prefer 'heilots' (< *heílôtes* or *heílôtai*) to 'helots'.

Difficulties arise mainly in the case of place names: 'Cyprus' is a Latinization of Kýpros, 'Syria' of Syría. I normally give preference to the Greek names in my discussion of the pre-christian and early christian Mediterranean world (Syría), but stick to 'ordinary' (Latinized) English usage elsewhere (Syria). Accents or the circumflex cannot be used, in any case, in adjectives derived from Greek place names (thus, 'Syrian' is used throughout). I prefer the Greek spelling in words like *akrópolis*, that normally appear only in a specifically Greek context, but retain 'ordinary' (Latinized) English spelling if words are not normally associated with a Greek context—for example 'isthmus' has become a technical term in geography that it makes little sense to insist on spelling isthmós; I also retain the accustomed Latinate spelling in the case of purely geographical terms that as such have no political or cultural connotations (e.g. Aegean and Mesopotamia). Also, Latinized names are given preference in the case of persons or characters more important to Latin speakers than to Greek speakers even though the names themselves are actually Greek (e.g. Aeneas < Aineías).

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Other points regarding spelling and nomenclature

If possible, I prefer to designate political units by the names by which they were known to contemporaries. In particular I write Lakedaímôn not 'Sparta' (or even 'Spártê', unless it is to designate the town in the physical sense rather than the *pólis* in the political sense), Lakedaimonians not 'Spartans'.

I refer to books by their original title, not least because the English title habitually used often seems to me to be a mistranslation. For example, *Politiká*, the title of a famous work by Aristotle, really means '*pólis* matters' not 'politics'. Plátôn never wrote on the 'republic', but did produce a work called *Politeía* (which could be variously rendered as 'citizenry, political community, political life, constitution'). Likewise, Augustine (Aurelius Augustinus) never wrote on the 'city of god', a better translation of *De civitate dei* being 'On the citizenry of god' or indeed 'the commonwealth of god'.

Terms denoting religious or ideological affiliation are not capitalized (hence 'christian', 'protestant'—after all one does not write 'Nationalist', either), nor is the word 'god'. However, I do write 'Jewish' since this also means an ethnic group—terms denoting ethnic affiliation are capitalized in line with common English usage. I also write 'Cistercian', 'Dominican', etc. since the reference here is to organizational rather than ideological affiliation.

Persian names are spelled using English pronunciation rules, but with the letter 's' always denoting a voiceless [s], the voiced counterpart [z] being written 'z'. 'ch' denotes [x] as in Scottish 'loch'.

German nouns are capitalized in accordance with German spelling rules.

Russian terms are transliterated in line with the standard system used in academic publications, where, in particular, 'c' denotes [ts]: *car*'. However, where that title occurs in the English text the 'normal' English spelling 'czar' is used.

Epithets of rulers are given in quotation marks (Edward 'the Confessor', Philip 'the Fair'). Rulers are never called 'the Great' (thus reference is not to 'Alexander the Great' but to 'Alexander III of Macedon').

Quotations from Greek or Latin authors appear in my own translation unless otherwise indicated.

Quotations from the Bible give the text of the Authorized Version (King James Bible).

Dates are given as BCE (Before the common era) or CE (Common era), but the letters BCE/CE are omitted if it is clear from the context which is meant.

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Abbreviations

IPO	Instrumentum Pacis Osnabrugense (peace treaty of Osnabrück, 24 October 1648)
LdA	Lexikon der Antike ('Der Kleine Pauly')
LdM	Lexikon des Mittelalters
FHG	Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum
PL	Patrologia Latina
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica

Series within the MGH:

MGH AA	Auctores antiquissimi
MGH Const.	Constitutiones et acta publica imperatorum et regum
MGH Dipl.	Diplomata regum et imperatorum Germaniae
MGH DM	Deutsches Mittelalter. Kritische Studientexte
MGH Ep.	Epistulae
MGH Ep. sel.	Epistulae selectae
MGH SS	Scriptores
MGH SSrG	Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum separatim editi
MGH SSrM	Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum

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1

Basics

1.1 History as popular myth in IR and elsewhere

The primary goal of the academic discipline of international relations (IR) has, so far, been to explain the present. Not until very recently has IR begun to extend its focus to events beyond living memory, in the sense that some authors are now trying to bring IR perspectives and methodology to bear on the social and political phenomena of past ages and societies. In the discipline as a whole this is as yet a marginal phenomenon. The IR mainstream still uses history in much the same way that it has always done: as a source of uncontroversial statements usually made in passing and in order to enhance an argument that in itself, more often than not, is about something present.

While history may or may not repeat itself, references to it in IR literature typically do. Such references tend to be limited to a relatively small pool of names, events, and concepts with which readers of this literature will be familiar. Names include Kautilya, Thukydídês, Hobbes, Louis XIV, Napoleon, and Hitler. Events include the Peloponnesian War and the Peace of Westphalia. Concepts include the Chinese warring kingdoms, the 'medieval-to-modern shift', and the concert of Europe. The familiarity is such that those very words can be treated as shorthand. Although their import for the point being made is of course normally spelled out, most readers will readily associate standard contexts in which such expressions appear in IR. Indeed, history is almost always used in IR to elicit Pavlovian responses. This is possible because history (or what conventionally passes as history) is regarded in IR as a source of certainties. For IR, paradoxically, history is what we know; the present is what we are trying to understand. The paradox is that we can actually know and understand infinitely more about our own time than we can know about the Greece of Thukydídês, the India of Kautilya, the China of the warring kingdoms, or 1648 Europe. How then can we improve our analysis of the present by reference to the past?

The way history is normally used in IR literature, of course we do not. Images of the past permeating, not only IR theory but indeed our civilization at large, are almost always highly simplified distillations that substitute false certainties for complex and ultimately

largely unknowable past realities. Mostly, history in IR is what might be called pop culture history: essentially, a set of shared trivia. It is of the cut-and-dried variety found in secondary school textbooks, consisting of propositions that one is compelled to learn, and which in later years one may be pleased to remember (perhaps also to be reminded of) but has no desire to verify. In part, this is no doubt because textbooks present their subject matter in the form of authenticated 'facts'. This corresponds to the traditional understanding of history. Much like IR, historiography as a discipline has only recently begun to grapple with the epistemological and methodological questions bedevilling it but still serenely ignored even by many historians. People are the less inclined to engage in critical review as they find that what they know about the past is more or less the same as what other people with a comparable education appear to know, too. There is a set of common understandings—a culture—that not only people feel comfortable with, but which it would be impossible for them to challenge without very considerable effort and determination and without alienating their peers and marginalizing themselves. In any case, Thukydídês, Kautilya, or Louis XIV will not talk back, whatever people say about them. Nor indeed, as far as IR is concerned, will most historians, even if still alive, for the simple reason that no one has yet convinced them of the need to take much notice of IR literature.

Almost never in IR literature is history discussed with anything approaching scientific rigour. When history is brought up in IR, there is no mention of the latest monographs or articles in historical journals, no taking of sides in ongoing controversies among historians, no discussion of the available evidence and its problems, and no awareness that historians will occasionally discover something new or, more frequently, come up with new interpretations. There is no recognition that our knowledge of the past might actually be insecure and historians' beliefs, shifting. If historians and their publications are cited, they are usually household names, indeed preferably dead. At the same time, in IR as in other polite society like that of journalists, diplomats, or, for that matter, political decision-makers, history is considered important. Why else *would* there be sufficient references to it in IR literature (and elsewhere) to elicit Pavlovian responses? Our civilization likes its history and attributes moral authority to it. It does so without reflecting on whether and in what way this might be logically tenable, and equally without reflecting on how popular images of the past are created and to what extent they correspond to verifiable data. Much, if not most of the history on what Norman Angell has aptly called the 'public mind'[1] is really myth, and serves the function that myth usually serves: it explains origins, creates shared identities, justifies action, and inspires behaviour.

Make any argument of the type 'history shows that' and you may be accused of having the wrong view of history (better therefore stick to aspects of history on which there is consensus). But you are unlikely to encounter opposition on the grounds that, since history is even more difficult to understand and be sure about than the present, it should not be used to try to throw light on the present except, possibly, in the most carefully controlled, methodologically self-conscious manner. I have argued elsewhere that the traditional separation of historiography on the one hand, social science (including political science and IR) on the other works to the detriment of both and that they should

[1]See e.g. Angell (1972) (his 1935 Nobel Prize speech).

really be one discipline.[2] This book is an attempt to review the evolution of 'western' civilization in line with this approach. Its subject matter is the evolution of political structures in 'western' civilization, of the way this civilization has been organized in the course of its development.

In the jargon of political science and IR, my approach is 'constructivist', a crucial premiss being that political structures exist only in people's minds, but not in the material world. In the minds of a great number of people, certain words or phrases (currently, e.g. 'state', 'government', 'People's Republic of China') correspond to essentially identical, shared concepts. That is the only reason why the objects designated by those words exist, even though they can only be represented symbolically, and are impossible to experience through our senses. For political terminology—a framework of interrelated terms—to create political structures, it is necessary for such terminology to be constantly confirmed through discourse. Only because the terms making up such terminology are employed so frequently can people be certain of what is being referred to without having to reflect, and that in turn is the reason why the structures themselves are stable.

The unquestioning readiness with which words and structures are correlated in people's minds lets them overlook the fact that without discourse the structures would not exist. The dependence of political structures (and other social structures) on the language in which they are expressed ordinarily goes unnoticed. Hence, it is commonly assumed without thinking that the political structures of the past, too, can be adequately described with the terminology of our own era. Past structures are erroneously seen as having a reality independent of the words used to portray them. But if social organization (at least from a certain level of complexity onwards) is in fact created from words, then although the social and political phenomena of the past can of course be approached with whatever words one chooses, they actually vary as a function of the words used. There is a very serious danger that in the retrospective appreciation of historians and other observers, the structures that actually existed in the minds of those who lived in them are replaced by something different. Past realities are thereby, or to that extent, replaced with fiction, myth. In my view, the present-day portrayal of the past even by professional historians does indeed contain much that is mythical, a tendency that becomes more pronounced the further removed from our own time the structures in question are.

This study strives to redress that tendency and to capture the actual social and political structures of the successive epochs of 'western' civilization, and their evolution, more adequately than has hitherto been done. It avoids unreflected usage of terminology alien to the epochs under discussion. What we know about the structures of those epochs will be checked against the terminology employed at the time. In its historical dimension, the civilization that we call western is also, indeed perhaps mainly, a collection of texts. Greeks and Romans before christianity, christendom as centred on either Constantinople or Rome until the end of the east Roman empire in 1453 and the Reformation, Europe between the fragmenting of the unity of Latin christendom and the beginning of industrialization have left a great amount of textual material from which the political discourse of past epochs may be reconstructed. The main focus will be the way in which past structures differed from those with which we are familiar. As the purpose of this

[2]Osiander (2004).

study is to examine the antecedents of currently existing structures, not those current structures themselves, the age of industrialization remains outside the purview of this study.

1.2 The 'state' a timeless marker of civilization? 'State' and language

Even nowadays, instead of the Greek *pólis* or the Roman republic we hear talk about the 'state' of Greek and Roman antiquity, instead of the *Reich* we hear about the 'German state of the middle ages' and indeed of the states of the Arabs, Turks, or Chinese. A form of organizing political unity that is quite unique to a period, that is historically conditioned, concrete, and specific, thus loses its place in history and its typical content. Misleadingly turned into an abstraction, it is applied to entirely different eras and peoples and projected onto entirely different structures and organizations. This elevation of the concept of the state to general default appellation of the form of political organization of all eras and peoples will likely soon come to an end together with the age of statehood itself. But it is still current now.[3]

Thus Carl Schmitt summed up what is also the point of departure of this study: the presentist fixation both of current historiography and social science on the 'state' as a timeless, inescapable phenomenon that may be safely taken for granted. Schmitt did not elaborate. In his works he routinely deals with the '(early-)modern' European 'state', but not with what took its place in other epochs or cultural settings. Even the passage quoted is in fact strikingly inadequate in this respect. The term *pólis* is commonly used in discussing ancient Greece. But this offers no advantage as long as in the popular imagination *pólis* simply means 'a Greek city-state'. Likewise, it is odd to suggest that the expression 'the Roman republic' is preferable to 'the Roman state'. 'Republic' in twentieth-century usage designates a certain form of *state* and should not be used, as it commonly is, to describe the *res Romana* under the rule of the senate, as opposed to the later 'empire'. The Roman commonwealth was in fact routinely called the *res publica* not just under the rule of the senate, but equally after that gave way to rule by 'emperors'—another word that, despite being derived from a Latin exemplar, does not have the same connotations nowadays as the original word *imperator* at the time. To speak of the *pólis*, of the 'Roman republic', of the German *Reich* without making clear in what way they differed from our concept of statehood yields no heuristic gain.

Note Schmitt's 'even nowadays': he first published this essay in 1941. Schmitt's prediction that the end of statehood as we know it will also bring the end of the fixation on the state in historiography is plausible. But the state has shown itself more resilient than many twentieth-century commentators thought. The state continues to be seen as the indispensable framework of politics. Within the state, everything that is commonly considered 'political' correlates in clearly, indeed juridically defined fashion with aspects of the state, even on the 'lower' level of, for example, local politics. Conversely, even on the 'interstate' level, or 'system level' in IR jargon, the state is not transcended, since by virtue of being its basic module it dominates the 'international system', too. Only special

[3]Schmitt (1958: 376); my trans.

forms of politics are designated as 'non-state' (as in 'non-state actors'), suggesting that here, again, the 'normal' thing is politics in, by, and for, the state.

On this view, the history of political structures, of political practice and political thought, is at the same time necessarily the history of the state. Like politics itself, so the state, too, is traced back in the relevant literature to the Greek roots of present-day 'western' civilization, meaning civilization based on Graeco-Roman and (Latin-)christian foundations, and beyond to the actual origins of 'civilization' as such, of which statehood is seen to be a marker. On this view, the state is virtually timeless. The word 'state' is nowadays employed systematically, indeed insistently, with regard to *all* historical epochs: something is always found to apply it to, as if it were not permissible for epochs to get away with not having had the state. Certain aspects of statehood may vary over time, but the essence has always been there, unchangeably, at least since the beginning of 'civilization'. Since, therefore, the state is considered a given, the concept, let alone its applicability to the past, is virtually never discussed. 'We have come to take the state for granted as an object of political practice and political analysis while remaining quite spectacularly unclear as to what the state is.'[4]

For the purposes of this study, a definition is, however, necessary. As I see it, the term 'state' implies the idea of a central supreme decision-making agency that both possesses means of coercion and claims recognition on the part of those subjected to it. The latter form a group that is unambiguously and exclusively associated with the central agency as well as being explicitly considered a community. 'Unambiguously' means that everyone, whether themselves part of that group or outside it, knows that a given group is associated with a given central agency, and 'exclusively' means that every group is only associated with one central supreme agency. Such a group is now normally called a 'nation', a term that connotes community. Finally, every state is associated with a clearly delimited part of the earth's surface, where the population of the state is settled and over which the central agency of the state has the exclusive supreme command, enabling it, within this territory, to overrule the lower administrative echelons as well as disregard private property.

Each element of the definition is both necessary and, on closer examination, anything but self-evident. In the history of western civilization, autonomous, self-aware political collectivities have not generally presupposed the existence of a central agency capable of enforcing its will. Such collectivities have often existed without means of (physical) coercion employable against itself, without police, indeed without a government—such as, for example, the *dêmokratía* of Athens in the fourth century BCE. Conversely, the mere fact of rule has not by itself created political collectivities. The great Macedonian-Greek empires of the second century BCE, ruled by the Antigonid, Seleukid, and Ptolemaic dynasties, did not coincide with political collectivities bound together by mutual solidarity, or indeed merely the perception of a common fate on the part of the subjects (or, for that matter, perception of a common fate of the subjects on the part of the central power). And the idea of rule being exercised within a precisely defined geographical space, indeed *over* space as is the case nowadays, has been alien to western civilization during the greater part of its history. It only begins to appear in post-Reformation Europe. All this is discussed in greater detail elsewhere in this book.

[4]Abrams (1988: 59).

Yet, in conformity with the notion of the timelessness of the state, nineteenth- and twentieth-century historiography refers casually to *Staaten der Frühzeit* (loosely, 'primitive states', the title of a work by the former president of the Federal Republic of Germany, Roman Herzog, about the origins of civilization) or to 'Greek city-states', ascribes statehood to the post-Persian Macedonian-Greek empires, conjures up, in the publications of famous historians on the age of pre-Reformation Latin christendom, the *états féodaux* ('feudal states', Marc Bloch), the *Personenverbandsstaat* (the 'state as an association of persons', an expression coined by Theodor Mayer and opposed by him to the later *Anstaltsstaat* or 'state as an—impersonal—institution'), or the 'state of the central middle ages' (Heinrich Mitteis).[5] Many historians who employ the term 'state' regardless of which period of western civilization is under discussion would readily concede that certain aspects of the 'modern' state, in particular strict territoriality and linear frontiers, were of less, indeed of little significance in the 'pre-modern' period. But this will not stop them from, in practice, treating the forms of social and political organization of past epochs as if they had, or should have, been 'states' with all their present-day attributes.

Conversely, the fixation on the 'state' is not found in earlier (pre-nineteenth-century) historiography by western authors, because at that time the notion of the state, let alone the idea that it was centrally important to politics, did not exist; indeed, before about the sixteenth century, the word itself did not exist, either. The present-day Romance and Germanic languages have a word uniformly derived from the Latin word *status* and uniformly employed to designate what in English political discourse is now called the 'state'. But this meaning of the word is of relatively recent origin. And although present-day languages belonging to other linguistic families also have words that may safely be equated with words for 'state' derived from the Latin *status* (e.g. Greek *krátos* or *politeía*, Russian *gosudarstvo*, Japanese *kokka*), this is not true of earlier epochs.

In 'classical' Latin (the written form of the language considered standard from the first century BCE onwards), *status* does not designate anything political, but means 'standing, position, the condition something is in' (derived from the verb *sto*—in the infinitive, *stare*—'to stand'). The original meaning is preserved side by side with the newer political one in the Romance languages and indeed in English ('he was in quite a state'). Words like *civitas* ('citizenry') or *res publica* (literally 'the common or public thing', to be translated for example as 'public affairs, public administration, common good, commonwealth', depending on the context) must not rashly be equated with 'state'—which, however, is what commonly happens.

Likewise, although the present-day Greek expressions mentioned above are morphologically identical with expressions also found in 'classical' Attic Greek (the language of Athens in the fourth century BCE, considered the standard to be aspired to at least in scholarly discourse until the fifteenth century and beyond), their meaning now is not identical with their meaning then. In Attic Greek *krátos* means 'strength, might, force, rule', while *politeía* means 'citizenry' or 'citizenship', and secondarily also 'political life, the way political life is organized, constitution'. Both words thus perhaps designate aspects of the modern state, the central agency equipped with coercive power and the community associated with it. But there is no word in Attic Greek to cover both aspects

[5] Herzog (1988); Bloch (1989: e.g. 563); Mayer (1939); Mitteis (1940).

simultaneously. The reason is precisely that forms of political organization that by their very nature join coercive rule and community were alien to pre-christian Graeco-Roman civilization.[6]

In christendom from about the fifth to the fifteenth century there is still no word for 'state' either in Latin or Greek. We do find *res publica* in Latin and, as near-equivalents in Greek, *politeía* as well as *koinón* (the latter a noun meaning 'that which is held in common'). But in the political discourse of this period, too, they are not applied to anything remotely resembling what we might consider states. The fourteenth-century 'schoolmen' or 'scholastics' of Latin christendom, who were highly attentive to semantics, like to speak of christendom in its entirety as a *res publica*. Bartolus of Sassoferrato (1313/14–57), the most famous legal scholar of his day, illustrates the indeterminacy of the concept in remarking that

> *res publica* may be employed in fourfold fashion. First, to mean the totality [i.e. christendom or indeed humanity], such as the empire [the Roman empire was at that time universally held to have existed continuously since its founding by Augustus and to comprehend all Latin christendom]. Second, to mean the public affairs [or: commonwealth, or some such] of the Romans [i.e. the inhabitants of the city of Rome]. Third, to mean the public affairs of any city. Fourth, to mean the public affairs of any municipality.

Bartolus' pupil Baldus de Ubaldis (1327–1400) offers a similar formulation.[7]

To designate autonomous lordships, practicians of the period preferred other words, in particular *regnum*, 'kingship, kingdom' (*regna* in the plural; the Greek equivalent is *basileía*, habitually employed to refer to the empire of Constantinople). Strikingly, neither Bartolus nor Baldus links the concept of *res publica* with the *regna*, despite their great importance in the society and politics of the period. Strikingly, too, neither *res publica* nor *regnum* nor any other word from the political vocabulary of 'classical' and pre-Reformation Latin has come to designate the 'state'. In conformity with the strong attachment to Latin in western civilization, a Latinate word is indeed used, but it acquired an entirely new meaning in order to designate a new phenomenon. *status* does appear in political discourse even in the pre- and early christian period, a frequently cited example being *status rei publicae*, 'the condition' or indeed 'the organization or constitution of the commonwealth'. But in or by itself the word was not the technical term that it became in the post-Reformation period.

Wolfgang Mager has painstakingly examined the etymological process by which, from about the twelfth century onwards, *status* became 'state' in its present meaning. Among the various possible roots of that new meaning as traced by Mager, the most significant

[6] As far as I can determine, the two words are not or not wholly interchangeable in present-day Greek, yet are assigned somewhat arbitrarily: *to hellênikó krátos* 'the Greek state', but *hoi Hênóménes Politeíes tês Amerikês* 'the United States of America'. Whereas today's Greek thus possesses two words for 'state' that by their etymology refer to different aspects of the present-day western concept of statehood, Russian in order to render this concept seems to have only a word designating rule but not community: *gosudarstvo* 'state' is derived from *gosudar'* 'lord, ruler'.

[7] *Respublica debet accipi quatuor modis. Primo, pro toto, veluti Imperio. Secundo, pro Republica Romanorum. Tertio, pro Republica cuiuslibet civitatis. Quarto, pro Republica cuiuslibet municipii.* Bartolus, *In tres posteriores codicis libros commentaria* 10.1.1. Cf. Baldus: *Respublica dicitur tribus modis . . . pro toto Imperio . . . pro Republica urbis Romae . . . pro qualibet civitate.* Baldus, *In primam digesti veteris partem commentaria* 1. Both quoted Mager (1984: 561).

is the usage in political and administrative discourse of *status* as a shortening of *status regalis* or *status regis* (or *ducalis*/*ducis*, etc.): literally 'the king's (or duke's, etc.) [high] position'. This would appear to be a coinage rather akin to the English expression 'the king's majesty', employed in preference to simply saying 'the king' even though that remains its meaning. In pre-Reformation christendom, the word *maiestas* was reserved for the emperor and was not generally used by other power-holders—if it had been, perhaps 'majesty' would have become the name given to the 'state'. Once *status regalis* had been established in its own right as a standing expression, it could be abridged to *status*, used as shorthand to designate the ruler (just as one might say 'his majesty' rather than 'the king'). Thus, the 'secretary of state'—found in Spain in 1516 as *secretario de* (or *del*) *estado*—actually was 'the king's secretary', and likewise the 'council of state' was 'the king's council'—the advisers or 'privy council' of the Spanish king Charles I (Charles V as Roman emperor) are collectively referred to in 1524 as *consejo de estado privado*, and in the Spanish Netherlands, where French was used as a language of administration, those advisers appear in 1531 as *conseil d'état* (as does the expression *secrétaire d'état*). In the same vein, *cose di stato*, *cosas de estado*, *affaires d'état* originally were 'the king's affairs' (or the duke's, etc.) and not 'matters of state' as we would understand that expression.[8]

(Interestingly, in an inscription in Attáleia—now Antalya—of 912 recording the strengthening of the city walls by the emperor Léôn VI, a certain Euphémios, under whose supervision the work was carried out, is described as *tou krátous mystográphos*. This title, which apparently is not otherwise known from the empire of Constantinople, is an exact semantic equivalent of 'secretary of state', and one would be tempted to consider it a calque were it not, in fact, older than that latter expression. The *Thesaurus Graecae Linguae*, a sixteenth-century Greek–Latin dictionary, renders *mystográphos* as *secretarius*—both are words referring to someone who deals with things that are 'secret' or 'privy'—and *krátos*, in its capacity as a synonym for *basileía*, as *regnum* or *regia dignitas*—a close equivalent to *status regalis*.)[9]

Mager has found that, from the late pre-Reformation period onwards, there was a tendency to extend the meaning of *status* to include the subjects and/or territories of the lordships (in the functional sense of 'the quality or position of being lord') so designated. If, as often happened, someone was simultaneously duke of A, duke of B, margrave of C, etc., it was convenient to designate as his *status* or 'states' (the nominative singular and the nominative plural of the Latin word are spelled the same) both the multiple titles of lordship that he might hold, and the inhabitants and territories of those lordships. On the other hand, *Zedlers Universal-Lexikon*, the great mid-eighteenth-century German encyclopaedia, explains under the entry *Staat* that the word means either 'government' (*Regierung*) or type of constitution (presumably in the same way in which Thomas Hobbes, in passages to be quoted in Chapter 4, speaks of the 'monarchical' or 'popular'—that is democratic—'state', likewise referring to the type of constitution). This usage of 'state' in the sense of 'government' evidently stems from *status*/*stato*/*état* as shorthand for the ruler and his or her collaborators, or put differently the central power. By contrast, the *Universal-Lexikon* fails to define 'state' as meaning an independent (or at least discrete) political unit in its entirety. In fact, *der*

[8] Mager (1968: 83).
[9] *Thesaurus Graecae Linguae*, 1829 edn. The inscription is in Grégoire (1922: no. 302).

Staat is still often employed in present-day German to designate 'the government', or more broadly the machinery of a state, as distinct from those over whom it has authority, the population. The word is now routinely used in the sense of the state in its entirety, too, but would not appear to have acquired this meaning before the end of the eighteenth century, when German usage began to follow the precedent of French and English in this respect.[10]

Alan Harding, in his recent work on *Medieval Law and the Foundations of the State*, has sought to show that the 'medieval' period did have the concept of the state. Unfortunately, he ignores theoretical issues almost completely, and even fails to define the key concept itself. Although he cites Mager, Harding focuses on occurrences of the word *status* and its vernacular equivalents and derivations in his sources even if they are clearly used with a different meaning from today's word 'state'—which Harding himself mostly seems aware of, though at times he is too quick to see what he wants to see. Thus he interprets a phrase from a 1495 German legal text—the *Ewiger Landfrieden* or Perpetual peace of the land, a general pacification of the Holy Roman Empire—*das statlicher . . . Hilff Not wäre* as meaning 'requiring the help of the state'. Indeed it would mean that in today's German. But the word *statlich* is still used here in its Middle High German sense of 'appropriate' (= in accordance with the status or standing of someone or something) and not in the sense of today's adjective *staatlich* 'of the state', so that the phrase should be rendered 'requiring appropriate assistance'. Similarly, *mit stattlichem, zeytigem Rat* in the same text is wrongly rendered by Harding as 'with statesmanlike and mature counsel'. He should have realized that *staatlich* does not mean 'statesmanlike' even in today's German, especially as he himself evidently had difficulty figuring out how this rather creative translation of *stattlich* fits in with the other adjective *zeytig*, derived from *Zeyt* (*Zeit*) 'time' and simply meaning 'timely' or 'early'—not 'mature', that is corresponding to what comes with time. The correct translation of the phrase is 'with proper and timely counsel'.

Harding is correct to identify *statlich* and *stattlich* as variant spellings of the same word in this text. *Grimms Wörterbuch*, a standard historical dictionary of the German language, explains that the vowel 'a' in this word has oscillated between short and long pronunciation depending on period and dialect. Nowadays *stattlich* 'impressive to behold' (= corresponding to elevated status or standing), pronounced with a short [a], is distinguished from *staatlich* 'of the state', pronounced with a long [a:]. But both are derived from the Latin word *status*. The survival of *stattlich* 'impressive' bears testimony to the fact that throughout most of the second millennium, German *Staat* meant not 'state' but '(high) status, magnificence, splendour'—as does its English equivalent in expressions like 'state apartments', 'live in state', 'lie in state', or indeed 'stately', the etymological counterpart of *stattlich*. In the 1495 *Landfrieden*, *Staat* is used in the sense of 'standing': the text bars anyone from taking the law into his own hands *von was Wirden, Stats oder Wesens der sey* 'of whatever dignity, *standing*, or quality he may be', that is regardless of social status. This or a very similar formula is used several times in

[10]I have analysed elsewhere the political terminology of a key political figure of 18th-cent. Europe, Wenzel Anton zu Kaunitz, in his great memorandum on the politics of Europe of 1749, and found that in Kaunitz' text, the German word *Staat* as yet never occurs in its present-day sense of independent political unit (Osiander 2004).

the document, and in varying the formula, *Stats* is repeatedly replaced with *Stands* (the genitive of *Stand*: standing, estate).[11]

It would be interesting to extend this examination to the discourse of such cultures that have come under the influence of western civilization only quite recently. To cite but one example, *kokka*, the word now used in Japanese for 'state', is one of a number of consciously created new 'political' expressions by which the elites of the Meiji period (1864–1912) sought to adapt semantically to their western models. Rather than taking an existing word and changing its definition, a new one was made up from two Chinese ideograms. To the first syllable corresponds a character that in Japanese means 'country', to the second a character that means 'house' as well as 'family, clan'. The idea is to equate the 'country'—concretely, Japan—with a family or clan, that is, with a community based on common descent (that also being the original meaning of *natio*, derived from *nascor* 'to be born' via the past participle *natus* 'born').

As a result, the term 'nation state' is hard to render in Japanese since 'nation' is seen to be already inherent in the word for 'state', *kokka*. On the other hand, less educated speakers of the Meiji period were apparently prone to misunderstand the neologism *kokka*. Since its first component 'country' formerly referred to a smaller territory, more particularly that of a local ruler or *daimyo* (even nowadays, it is used to refer to someone's place of origin *within* Japan, much like its French equivalent *pays*), letters by Japanese soldiers from the time of the Russo-Japanese War of 1905 erroneously employ *kokka* to mean 'the family back home', whose members, illiterate themselves, are to be greeted by the village elder.[12]

1.3 'State' and discourse of eternity in historiography and social science. The notion of 'bounded entities'

Taking for granted the central political importance and the timelessness of the 'state', nineteenth- and twentieth-century historiography has blithely assigned this term to whatever appeared suitable (or least unsuitable) in any given period of western civilization. But in doing so it says less about the past than about itself. R. B. J. Walker[13] sees the concept of the state as an answer to the problem of three fundamental delimitations in politics: of the particular and the universal, of self and other, of space and time.

The manifestation of a culture that is universally shared, the state is at the same time both particular and universal. Each state is a particular collectivity while at the same time representing the state as such, the state as a category that must exist always and everywhere. Further, each state is a collective self that is clearly set apart from whoever or whatever is found outside its borders. In today's world, it is above all the 'foreigner' or 'alien' who is seen as the Other: but this otherness is essentially created by means of the territorial and institutional borders between the state and its peers. Politics as we

[11] Harding (2002: 108). I have given the relevant quotations in the spelling in which I find them in Buschmann (1984: no. 6) (pp. 162, 159).

[12] I thank Naoko Shimazu for explaining to me the origin, semantics, and usage of this term. Cf. Shimazu (2001: esp. 85).

[13] Walker (1995).

know it operates as an elaborate system of inclusion and exclusion, of distinction between inside and outside, self and other.

'No territory, no state,' observes Alexander Wendt, comparing 'state authority' to that of 'churches or firms, neither of which is intrinsically territorial in character. State authority is.'[14] The importance of space to today's state could not be made clearer. Walker, too, stresses the way today's politics is fixed in space. Time and the change it may bring is tamed by channelling it through a framework or mesh placed at right angles to the time axis and of which the state, an intrinsically spatial entity, forms the modular unit. Change is reduced to taking place within this state-centred, intrinsically spatial framework, held to be unaffected by change at least with regard to its essential nature. Walker calls this dogma the 'discourse of eternity' of IR—though in fact, far from being the preserve of that discipline, it is accepted throughout western society. The expression alludes to the quasi-sacral taboo on questioning this discourse, which has the effect of making any doubt as to its truth appear absurd. However, Walker emphasizes the nature of the current western discourse of eternity as a construct specific to a historical period. Since the existence, let alone the effect of the phenomenon is not recognized, even academic literature looks at the past through the prism of today's discourse of eternity. This is true of historiography and social science in general, but it is especially marked in IR as that social science discipline which alone has paid significant attention to the problem of long-term change of political structures.

The current discourse of eternity, with its downplaying of the temporal dimension of politics, takes an extreme form in the notion, widely known in IR under the label 'realism', that in the history of 'international' relations there has never been a time that was not the present. It is assumed that the structures forming the setting of the historical processes examined (or rather, generally not examined but given the 'Pavlov' treatment) are immutable in their essence. It is suggested that, with regard to their intrinsic nature, states clearly delimited from each other and engaged in antagonistic competition with other states have always existed, and that this immutable quality of 'international systems' or 'systems of states' has always produced similar patterns of behaviour; among the latter, the efforts by states to preserve a 'balance of power', if necessary by war, are often highlighted.

Thus, Martin Wight has famously described international politics as the 'realm of recurrence and repetition'. Similarly Kenneth Waltz, the best-known recent exponent of IR 'realism', in a passage of his highly influential *Theory of International Politics* of 1979 claims that '[t]he texture of international politics remains highly constant, patterns recur, and events repeat themselves endlessly.' Many more such utterances by 'realist' authors could be adduced. The fixation on space—an implicit fixation based on the notion of the state as a centralized *territorial* entity—is here carried to the point of negating the role of time altogether. From the perspective of this study, what Andrew Linklater has called the 'immutability thesis' is of course simply a particularly impressive testimony to the virulence of today's discourse of eternity.[15]

The idea of the necessity and timelessness of units clearly, and more particularly territorially, delimited from each other is reflected in the distinction of 'levels of analysis'

[14] Wendt (1999: 211).

[15] Wight (1966: 26); Waltz (1979: 66); Linklater (1996: 282). Comparable utterances by other 'realist' authors are compiled e.g. by Mark Zacher and Richard Matthew (1995: 108).

that has been current in IR since the early 1960s. Kenneth Waltz argued in 1959 that the various approaches to understanding international politics may be located on one of three levels, that of the individual, that of the state, and that of the international system; the same threefold distinction was proposed in a well-known article by J. David Singer published only a little later.[16] Once again, the state is here presented as indispensable and as centrally important. To have an international system, you need the state as its basic unit. At the same time, it is the state that separates the level of the individuals from the level of the system. An explicit or implicit prerequisite of this distinction of levels of analysis is the notion of the boundedness of the state or of whatever else is seen as the equivalent basic unit of politics.

In his contributions to IR theory, Waltz himself has always based himself on the threefold distinction of levels. But this only works if the basic unit of the middle level, normally called the 'state', is clearly separated from its (similarly constructed) neighbours. Otherwise the middle level cannot act as an effective divider between individuals and the structural whole, the system. Critics of Waltz, notably John Ruggie, have pointed out that the notion of bounded entities on the middle level, presented as natural and ineluctable as long as there is no world state, and hence the entire threefold distinction cannot be applied for example to 'medieval feudalism', a form of political organization characterized by interpenetration of the political actors.[17]

Indeed, even Waltz in his *Theory of International Politics* shows traces of a certain wavering concerning the omnipresence of the 'state' in history.

> The ruler's, and later the state's, interest provides the spring of action; the necessities of policy arise from the unregulated competition of states; calculation based on these necessities can discover the policies that will best serve a state's interests; success is the ultimate test of policy, and success is defined as preserving and strengthening the state.

Thus Waltz explains the concept of *Realpolitik*.[18] But why the formulation 'the ruler's, and later the state's interest'? This might imply that the state has always existed, but its interest—as opposed to that of those in power in it—has only come to be a factor recently: an interpretation that raises more questions than it answers. Or is this formulation meant to suggest that the state has not always existed, and something else preceded it? In the context of this passage Waltz talks about Machiavelli—perhaps he was not certain that he could speak of states in that period. But the insecurity is compensated by the fact that the word 'state' appears no less than four times in the same sentence; and the import of that sentence is evidently that, even if one chose to object that Machiavelli as yet knew no states in today's sense of the word, there was still something to which the same considerations applied—in this instance, 'rulers'.

This manner of proceeding can be found elsewhere in Waltz, too; indeed it is typical of the way in which the current discourse of eternity most often deals with the objection that political structures undergo change. A certain amount of variability is conceded, but it is denied that the difference from one period to the next or one locale to the next might be of a fundamental nature. In the same book, Waltz declares: 'International structures are defined in terms of the primary political units of an era, be they city states,

[16] Waltz (1959); Singer (1961).
[17] Ruggie (1986).
[18] Waltz (1979: 117).

empires, or nations. Structures emerge from the coexistence of states.' Here again there is ambiguity: to what extent do the enumerated kinds differ from one another, and to what extent are they simply variants of one and the same thing? Taken as a whole, the formulation only allows the conclusion that 'the primary political units of an era' are states, independently of their appellation and their specific historical guises.[19]

The same manner of proceeding is illustrated by another well-known representative of IR 'realism', Robert Gilpin. A section of his book about structural change in world politics is entitled 'Definition of the state', but instead of proposing an actual definition it deals on several pages with the state of our own time or of recent historical experience. In the manner typical of the current discourse of eternity, some variability of political structures is acknowledged in passing: 'Throughout history, in fact, states and political organizations have varied greatly: tribes, empires, fiefdoms, city-states etc.' This exhibits the same ambiguity as in Waltz: are the expressions 'states' and 'political organizations' synonymous or not? Gilpin does not offer any discussion, based on the formulation cited, of the applicability of his idea of statehood to past epochs. But he routinely speaks of 'states' regardless of the period under review (e.g. 'The classic history of Thucydides is as meaningful a guide to the behavior of states today as when it was written in the fifth century BC').[20]

In a more recent article, Waltz reaffirms his conviction both of the timelessness of the principles of 'international' politics and of the fundamental immutability, as far as the validity of those principles is concerned, of the 'units' interacting in systems devoid of a central power: 'The logic of anarchy obtains whether the system is composed of tribes, nations, oligopolistic firms, or street gangs.'[21] One thing the kinds of actors enumerated in this formulation have in common is their clear delimitation from each other. One generally is a member of one of the kinds of organization in question, or one is not. One cannot well be a member to a greater or lesser extent, and one cannot normally belong to more than one such entity at a time. The formulation presupposes homogeneous actors, that is, systems composed exclusively of tribes, nations, and so on. In heterogeneous systems, firms could of course interact with street gangs, or nations with tribes. Significantly, such a possibility is precluded in Waltz only by the context of his remarks, not explicitly.

Historically, as we shall see, heterogeneous not homogeneous systems have in fact been the norm in western civilization. But under the influence of the conventional view of 'international systems' or 'systems of states'—which Waltz does indeed repeatedly assert to be composed of 'like units'—homogeneity of the units is automatically, and quite wrongly, regarded as the default setting. The idea of units that are both homogeneous and clearly delimited remains central and is normally considered applicable without being explicitly discussed. On this view, then, even in dealing with past epochs there is always, if not the state as we know it, then some functional equivalent.

Only the importance of the current discourse of eternity can explain why 'realism' insists on the timelessness of its principles at all. One should think it sufficient to hold those principles to be valid in the present age and to leave open the question of their applicability to the past. However, 'realism' has never done that: what could be called the 'eternity axiom' is always upheld by 'realist' authors.

[19] Waltz (1979: 91).
[20] Gilpin (1981: 15–25); quotations at pp. 18 and 7.
[21] Waltz (1995: 81).

In fact, the question of whether the state really is a timeless phenomenon is quite under-researched. In 'historical sociology', which deals with the historical development of political structures, there is a tendency to give preference to the evolution of the 'modern' state and in doing so to go back no further than the period of late pre-Reformation christendom.[22] Only rarely has the attempt been made to transcend this rather close chronological horizon and trace the genealogy of the state further back. Of course there are good reasons to keep authors away from such a project. For many people the recent past seems to be of greater interest than the more distant past, or at least more deserving of close analysis; long duration of the time-span to be examined entails an enormous quantity of information to be processed; the time needed for the necessary research seems out of proportion with the kind of book that will not deter too many prospective readers by its length. Yet perhaps the primary cause why hardly anyone has bothered to trace the development of the state from its alleged origin at the dawn of civilization is that, on account of our discourse of eternity, the timelessness of the state is not questioned anyway. There is no claim here that would seem to require proof, no problem worth examining. Why research a question the answer to which is known?

Within the discipline of IR, there are two major works that have transcended the usual focus on the 'modern' state and its development over the last half-millennium or so, and which seek to provide an overview over the evolution of 'international' structures in its entirety. One is the 1992 study by Adam Watson, *The Evolution of International Society*. The very title situates the book within the tradition of 'English School' IR, for which the concept of 'international society' is of central importance: according to this, states systems, despite being anarchical, may derive some measure of order and stability from norms shared by the actors.[23] Watson examines not just those 'systems of states' cited ordinarily (the 'classical' European one supposed to have come into being in the mid-seventeenth century, the Italian 'city-states' of the fifteenth century, Greece in the age of the *pólis*), but all those found since the dawn of civilization, with pre-Hispanic America the sole omission. The book begins thus:

> This enquiry is designed as a contribution to our understanding of how systems of states function. An understanding of how the contemporary society of states came to be what it is, and how it may develop in the future, requires a sense of how other societies operated and developed in the past. But we will not gain much understanding if we merely trace our present arrangements back in time. We need to examine the different patterns of relations between states in their own individuality and on their own merits; and then compare them. This book accordingly sets out to ask, first, what were the institutions, and also the assumptions and codes of conduct, by which past groups of political entities tried to order and regulate the systems that bound them together.[24]

Despite the warning against too exclusive a focus on present arrangements, the word 'states' appears in the very first sentence Watson writes and then again and again. Indeed, Watson espouses the conventional position that states are as old as civilization

[22] To give just some examples of works that have had some resonance in IR, this is true of Giddens (1985); Poggi (1978); Spruyt (1994); Tilly (1990).

[23] The classic exposition of this idea of international society is Bull (1977).

[24] Watson (1992: 1).

itself—the main body of the book begins with a chapter called 'Sumer: The original states system'.

In the Introduction, Watson notes that '[b]y states we conventionally mean sovereign states: independent political authorities (unitary or confederal) which recognize no superior.'[25] The formulation 'by states we *conventionally* mean' leaves open whether Watson accepts this definition or not; certainly he omits to suggest an alternative definition. The one given is not very good. As it stands it can scarcely be applied even to today's states, but at most to their governmental apparatus. It leaves implicit many things that readers have to supply in their own mind, which they will of course do in accordance with the current discourse of eternity: to the one element of today's states that Watson alludes to they will automatically add the others. They can scarcely help projecting the image of today's states onto the past and onto different cultures whenever Watson fails to specify anything to the contrary.

In a section devoted to defining key terms, 'states' as such are not discussed further, but only 'independent states', which according to Watson are 'political entities that retain the ultimate ability to take external decisions as well as domestic ones'. Again this is imprecise—how does one recognize 'entities', how for example are they delimited from each other, and what makes them 'political'? But this kind of question is not what interests Watson (here or anywhere else in the book), the point being instead when to consider entities 'independent'. Watson presumably implies that 'the ultimate ability to take external decisions as well as domestic ones' is not shared with external agents. In itself the formulation by no means excludes this, but the conventional image of states as 'sovereign' does. Once more that conventional image is evidently relied on here, and evidently quite automatically and unconsciously so since Watson is in fact asserting that complete independence is *not* an attribute of 'states'. He reasons that in past 'systems of states' the degree of independence of 'states' has varied along a spectrum ranging from total autonomy to total subjection.[26]

Only at this stage does it become clear retrospectively why Watson qualifies as 'conventional' the definition quoted earlier: for him, 'states' do not have to be completely autonomous. This, however, means that no definition of 'states' remains at all—or are all 'political authorities', whether independent or not, to be treated as states? One is forced to conclude that Watson in fact proceeds empirically. At the same time, he employs the word 'states' in entirely traditional fashion, that is to say, in conformity with the discourse of eternity saturating twentieth-century historiographical literature—witness the idea of 'Sumerian city-*states*'.

The second of the works mentioned is the study by Barry Buzan and Richard Little on *International Systems in World History* published in 2000. This is an overview of the development of political structures in the history of humanity, covering a period of 60,000 years. Buzan and Little are too well-versed in IR theory not to subject the concept of the state to critical discussion. In particular they take up the idea of levels of analysis.

> The criticism of it is that levels [of analysis] are not just an innocent, abstract typology: the scheme presents a specific ontology that privileges the state, and obscures and discriminates against those transnational units that do not clearly fit into the scheme.

[25] Watson (1992: 3).
[26] Watson (1992: 13–14).

Nevertheless, Buzan and Little cling to the idea and merely modify it by distinguishing five levels instead of three: 'system, subsystem, unit, subunit, and individual'. And even though they assert that they 'wish to keep an open mind about what types of unit can compose international systems', they stick to the notion that bounded entities can be found in all 'international systems'.[27]

A slot for the 'state' thus remains. Moreover, as the book unfolds Buzan and Little fill this slot by something they really do call 'state', routinely and without discussion. They assert that the appearance of bounded political entities is a prerequisite of 'international' politics, while also claiming that this coincided with the alleged invention of the 'state' in ancient Sumer.

> In the pre-international world . . . it was not really possible to differentiate between the domestic and the international. Units were mostly too small, too interdependent, and not sufficiently hierarchical in their internal organization to generate 'inside' and 'outside' political realms . . . But with the formation of city-states and empires, units became large and internally complex enough to consolidate an inside/outside political construction. The point at which such an inside/outside construction takes hold is the point at which true international systems come into being.

And:

> Urbanization gave rise to cities, which in turn gave rise to city-states and empires. These city-states and empires were larger, more concentrated, and more differentiated than any type of unit that preceded them. Their internal structures . . . clearly identify them as an early type of state. . . . The story of Sumeria tells how the first city-states developed, and how they generated the first empires.[28]

As with Watson, a laudable attempt at theory merely ends up confirming the current discourse of eternity. Quite conventionally, 'states' make their entrance with civilization itself. According to Buzan and Little, Sumer not only stands at the beginning of a long succession of international systems, but its development displays characteristics also found in the other systems, *even* if they had no contact, direct or indirect, with Sumer, suggesting that such characteristics do represent 'laws' of politics independent of time or place. Thus: 'The rise of the first full international system in Sumeria contains many of the elements that marked the emergence of subsequent international systems as far afield as China and Meso-America.'[29]

Apart from works by IR authors like Watson and Buzan and Little, there are works by authors from other disciplines that also follow the development of political structures over a long period. The great overview by S. E. Finer, *The History of Government from the Earliest Times*, owes more to 'domestic' political science. Michael Mann, with his monumental history of 'social power' since the beginning of civilization, is a sociologist.[30] Mann criticizes the fixation of sociology (and he might have added, of political science and IR) on the present, their lack of historical consciousness, and conversely the reluctance of historians to reflect on theory. 'In this volume, I repeatedly question the application

[27] Buzan and Little (2000: 69–72); quotations at pp. 71, 72.
[28] Buzan and Little (2000: 163, 169).
[29] Buzan and Little (2000: 169).
[30] Finer (1997); Mann (1986, 1993).

of essentially modern notions—such as nation, state, class, private property, and the centralized state—to earlier historical periods.'[31] The distinction between the 'state' on the one hand and the 'centralized state' on the other seems odd, and once again highlights the difficulty of the concept especially when applied to the more distant past. Mann, too, nevertheless does not hesitate to do so, routinely employing the word for example in his discussion of ancient Mesopotamia.[32]

To be sure, IR 'realism', or more generally the state-centredness of IR or other branches of social science, has long been attracting criticism: it has often been asked whether the state is not about to lose its primacy in today's world owing to growing interdependence, globalization, the rise of non-governmental organizations, the Internet, or whatever. Only rarely has such scepticism with regard to the present-day role of the state led to similar scepticism with regard to its supposed primacy in the past. However, already in 1988, Yale Ferguson and Richard Mansbach noted that

> if the observer concludes that the state is an historically omnipresent phenomenon, he is confronted with a bewildering array of entities with so little in common that he is forced to adopt highly abstract and effectively nonoperational definitions of the phenomenon he is seeking. . . . Identifying the origins of the state poses less of an historical than a conceptual problem. In other words, whether one conceives the state as having always existed or having been born in a particular era depends largely on one's definition of the state.[33]

Ferguson and Mansbach have since published a monograph that explicitly counters the conventional idea of the geographical and historical ubiquity of the state. To the word 'state' they prefer the word 'polity' to designate political entities. In six case studies (ancient Mesopotamia, Greece from the 'archaic' period to Alexander of Macedon, China from the early Chou period to the Han period, pre-Hispanic Meso-America, the world of early islam, and Italy from the Romans to the Renaissance), they seek to demonstrate that the entities under review frequently lacked key attributes of the state, especially that of boundedness, the clear delimitation of inside and outside so characteristic of today's state. According to Ferguson and Mansbach, political entities need not exist side by side and clearly demarcated from one another; rather the historical record shows them to have frequently been superimposed on one another or to have interpenetrated.[34]

1.4 The method of this study

Historical structures, the cumulative result of innumerable often-repeated actions, are discoverable through the common understandings and common expectations of behavior that provide the common framework for actions. Another way of saying this is that historical structures are revealed as intersubjectivity. Language; patterns of response to stimuli considered as normal behavior; institutions like the family and the state; as well as less formally defined but nevertheless recurrent practices of personal morality and international behavior—all are constituted by intersubjectivity. Intersubjectivity does not mean approval or consensus, just

[31] Mann (1986: vii).
[32] Mann (1986: ch. 3).
[33] Ferguson and Mansbach (1988: 118).
[34] Ferguson and Mansbach (1996).

common recognition of the existence of these things. Intersubjectivity makes them objective independently of individual wills.[35]

The insight that social and more particularly political structures come into being if and only if a sufficiently large number of people share the same assumptions concerning those structures to me seems fundamental for understanding both present-day politics and the transmutations that political structures undergo in the long term. To illustrate this with a simple example, the 'state' called Federal Republic of Germany (FRG for short) exists exclusively in the imagination, but it does so in the minds of a very large number of people. No one can touch the FRG; it is 'merely' a complex bunch of assumptions. This bunch of assumptions called FRG does indeed continually produce material, tangible manifestations—ranging from coloured contours on maps that can indeed be touched to the exercise of coercion, indeed physical coercion, when for instance policemen arrest a suspect or the decision-makers competent to do so order the armed forces at their disposal to engage in military conflict. But such manifestations do not embody the FRG, they reflect it (rather as in physics 'force' is only manifested through its effects). And even the physical manifestations require assumptions without which they would be impossible or make no sense.

That, without even being labelled, the weather map in the evening news on television is understood the way it is intended, as a representation of the 'national territory' of the FRG, presupposes universally shared cartographical and political norms. The police could not operate in the absence of certain notions of 'law' and concerning the necessity of a monopoly on legitimate violence on the part of the 'state', notions shared by the policemen themselves as well as the public at large. Even among soldiers, discipline and obedience ultimately cannot be obtained through force: an army of slaves would not be very useful. Physical sanctions to enforce discipline only work on the basis of notions of legitimacy and necessity recognized at least by the soldiers, if not the larger public of which they are a part.

But the FRG exists not only because of assumptions on the part of those closely associated with it, especially those that consider themselves and each other 'citizens' of the FRG. It exists also thanks to the assumptions of people that are not close to it physically or mentally or indeed who have never heard of it. For the FRG exists only because (*a*) it reproduces a globally recognized archetype 'state' and (*b*) because notions shared globally have created structures, a global political system, that as it were offer the FRG a habitat. Imagine for a moment that the assumptions responsible for the phenomenon FRG were limited to native speakers of German and were met with incomprehension on the part of everyone else. In such conditions the FRG would not exist for long.

Political structures have no material reality but are exclusively based on common assumptions. If no one ever questioned or ignored those assumptions, the structures that consist of them would be totally stable. If discrepancies occur between such assumptions (which may happen if new assumptions spread), the structures are destabilized. If existing assumptions are replaced, the structures change. Both structural continuity and structural change can thus be explained as a function of assumptions universally accepted, or competing with or displacing one another.

[35] Cox (1989: 38).

At this point two clarifications are in order. First, the fact that political structures are based on assumptions does not mean that people are necessarily conscious of those assumptions. Second, the fact that social and political structures are immaterial does not mean that they are independent of their material environment.

Like other forms of knowledge or other learned abilities, structural assumptions are ordinarily applied more or less automatically, subconsciously, both in spite of and because of their great complexity. Driving a car is a complex activity that most people accomplish smoothly precisely because they do not have to think about what they are doing. It is the same with the assumptions creating political structures. If people had to apply them consciously, they would get bogged down in hesitation and insecurity; indeed many people would feel out of their depth if confronted with such a demand. The relevant assumptions are usually applied automatically, and in fact to a considerable extent it is not they that are learned but the behaviour that goes with them. Just as one learns to walk or to ride a bicycle, one learns to deal with social institutions like the family, and with political institutions like the state.

The discourse of eternity here fulfils an educational purpose: it stabilizes society by convincing its members that the state is something natural and immutable, to which one has to adapt by means of certain learned abilities—similar to gravity, to which people have to adapt when they learn to walk. It is much easier to hold the state to be as natural and inescapable as gravity, than to try to understand what makes them different; the more so as the practical benefit of that latter endeavour will, in the eyes of most people, be extremely limited. For most people, the reality of pressures exercised on them in the name of the state will come close to the ineluctability of the Newtonian principles. I can of course step onto a soapbox and announce my rejection of assumptions underpinning the FRG. But this is unlikely to prevent my ending up in jail if I contravene German law, for example by refusing to pay my taxes.

Concerning the dependence of structural assumptions on material factors, there are indications that certain societal norms are encoded genetically. Such 'epigenetic' norms would cause instinctive behaviour that, since they are common to mankind as a species, would show up in all or certainly in most cultures. The standard example is the so-called Westermarck effect, the taboo on sexual relations between closely related partners found in many cultures quite independent of one another and equally in all primate species that have been examined from this angle. The Finnish anthropologist Edward Westermarck posited in 1891 that the taboo on incest is instinctive, 'natural' behaviour, a thesis strongly rejected for instance by Sigmund Freud. The current state of research seems to suggest that Westermarck was right, indicating an evolutionary, epigenetic origin of this taboo rather than arbitrary social convention. The origin of nationalism, too, or at least of the human tendency to identify with some larger group, has been sought in socio-biological factors.[36]

However this may be, social structures and the assumptions underlying them are interrelated with the constraints and opportunities governing the material reproduction of society. Thus the invention of agriculture had an obvious, profound influence on the organization of those adopting the new techniques of production. Likewise, however, far from representing the continuation of pre-agricultural society, the nomadic cultures

[36]For the controversy on the Westermarck effect, see Wilson (1998: 193–9); on epigenetic norms in general ibid. ch. 7. For possible epigenetic factors of nationalism, see e.g. Kellas (1991: ch. 1).

often found on the margins of farmed areas are in fact also indirectly influenced by the agricultural communities in their vicinity, and to a certain extent depend on them.[37] The history of western civilization in the last few centuries would have looked dramatically different without the invention of firearms, printing, or the steam engine—or, less well known but as important, the exploitation of water power and wind power, discussed later in this book.

Yet important as this interrelation is, it is almost impossible to arrive at generalizations on the form it will take in given instances or on its consequences. Except perhaps for the following: there is no determination of immaterial factors by material factors. Not even the consequences on given cultures of factors that are presumably epigenetic may be predicted with any certainty. A taboo on incest is found in the majority of cultures where it has been looked for. But we also know of cultures that approved incest. For example, there is ample evidence from all strata of the population of the practice of brother–sister marriage in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt.[38] Similarly, there may well be a genetic inclination to identify with some larger group, but there is evidently nothing to determine what kind of group, or history would not record so many different possibilities. Put differently, even if a genetic predisposition towards certain forms of behaviour is plausible, social norms do not in every case reflect it, and even if they do, the practical effect may vary greatly in different cultures.

Moreover, it can be difficult to disentangle the way material and immaterial factors act on each other. Early city-dwelling cultures in Eurasia arose along great rivers—the Euphrates, the Tigris, the Nile, the Indus, the Huangho—and were based on the material foundation of complex irrigation schemes. It was thought at one time that the construction of such irrigation schemes was only possible thanks to enforced collectivization and the creation of a central power of command. The idea was that only a ruler or a ruling collective equipped with coercive power was capable of motivating and coordinating the large number of workers needed to create such systems, and to maintain them in light of the fact that without constant upkeep they silt up and quickly become unusable. On closer examination, however, it turns out that the irrigation schemes are older than the coercive patterns of rule that developed in the relevant areas.

The connection between the two is at present interpreted differently. Michael Mann has recognized irrigation schemes as 'cages': their beneficiaries could no longer flee from attempts to establish coercive rule over them, at least not without giving up the material benefits of civilization. In Egypt it was the irrigation schemes that allowed the unification of the Nile valley under pharaonic rule, not the other way around.[39] It was evidently as a result of such change that dogmas (assumptions) then appeared that served to exalt the new power-holders: they came to be presented as deputies of a powerful god, or divine or semi-divine themselves. Once developed, such notions could then be taken over by cultures whose material bases were entirely different, de-linking those dogmas from the material conditions which had allowed them to develop.

With the exception of Egypt, the cultures of the pre-christian Mediterranean world needed no large-scale irrigation schemes. As we shall see, the indigenous political thinking of those cultures reflects this—not least in the vigorous rejection of coercive rule, which

[37] Cf. Whittow (1996: esp. 21–5).
[38] Hopkins (1980*a*).
[39] Mann (1986: 80, 94–8, 108–15).

was much more difficult to establish here than in areas with large-scale irrigation. This theory of a link between the exaltation of rulers as divine or semi-divine and a material base of the cultures in question that involved a high degree of collectivization and mutual dependence and thus made for effective 'cages' is corroborated *e contrario* by the typically weak kingship of the early European peoples relying simply on rainfall, like the Greeks, Macedonians, Etruscans, Romans, and Germans. Here kingship in fact was often ultimately lost—it atrophied or was abolished among almost all Greeks and in Rome.

However, after the conquest of the Persian empire, and against opposition rooted in the old indigenous norms delegitimizing coercive rule, Alexander of Macedon and the Greek-speaking rulers that succeeded him resolutely adopted notions of kingship and its (semi-)divine character from Persian-Mesopotamian, and in the case especially of Ptolemaic Egypt of course also from Egyptian civilization. Later, likewise against opposition based on the old libertarian values, similar notions were also adopted by the rulers of the Roman empire. Finally, through the intermediary of the christian church, which conveyed notions of kingship both late Roman and derived from the Old Testament, they became available to the kings of christian Europe—even though the original link with large-scale irrigation schemes had long been lost.

Conversely, the same material change does not necessarily have the same effect, or indeed any effect, on the social and political structures of different cultures. Firearms and printing contributed much to the evolution of pre- and post-Reformation western christendom and its political structures. Both technologies were known in the Far East (China, Korea, Japan) before they reached Europe or were invented there independently. But they remained far from having a similarly strong effect on Far Eastern cultures and patterns of rule as in Europe.[40]

The impact of material factors on the evolution of social and political structures in western civilization will be a recurrent theme in this study. But important as it is, in the last resort its effect is indirect: it works not on the structures themselves but on the assumptions underlying them. Those assumptions in turn are reflected in discourse, in the terminology of the epochs to be examined. 'Historical sociology' has failed so far to take account of that key dimension of structural development. The authors in question treat history as if it could be determined objectively, just like the geological history of the planet may be reconstructed from rock strata—whose existence and meaning is independent of attempts to interpret them.

Mostly, historical sociologists do not rely on primary sources but build on the efforts of more highly specialized historians. Those historians, however, in their turn already project their own assumptions concerning social structures onto their data at least as much as they derive information about those structures from it. The problem starts with their vocabulary. As mentioned already, it is scarcely possible to find historians specializing in, say, ancient Mesopotamia or ancient Greece that do not unhesitatingly speak of 'city-states' in describing their period and usually employ other terminology projecting recent notions of 'international' politics back into the past, like 'great power', 'balance of power', 'economic politics', 'trade interests', 'diplomacy', and so on. Conversely, the terminology of the sources appears hardly at all in their work, and if it does, then often

[40]I have enlarged on this in Osiander (2004: esp. 309–11).

only to the extent that they feel able to establish analogies between period terms and modern ones—for example, between *pólis* and 'state'.

Today's world cannot currently be portrayed on the basis of ideas that seriously contradict the standard current worldview of our civilization, at least not without provoking protest—but then hardly anybody would even be tempted to discuss the social structures of their own time using political terminology, and thus assumptions, different from those of their contemporaries. For any observer the social structures of his or her own time are something objective: 'Intersubjectivity makes [social structures] objective independently of individual wills,' in the words of Robert Cox, already quoted. Or as Alexander Wendt puts it:

> Even though social kinds are not mind/discourse-independent of the collectivity that constitutes them, they *are* usually independent of the minds and discourse of the *individuals* who want to explain them. . . . The international system confronts the IR theorist as an objective social fact that is independent of his or her beliefs, and resists an arbitrary interpretation of it.[41]

This immunity of present-day social structures to arbitrary interpretation results from the fact that terminology used to describe it that is not the accepted terminology or demonstrably compatible with it would immediately be challenged, owing to the familiarity of the public with what 'normal' terminology is. By contrast, the terminology of past epochs and the structural assumptions that it reflects are *not* familiar to today's public, and indeed more or less incomprehensible (what percentage of people alive now even know Greek, Latin, or Middle English, let alone are familiar with political terminology in those languages?—and even, say, seventeenth-century English, French, or German are not without their semantic pitfalls). Add to that that historians can say what they like about the past without any risk of being contradicted by the dead. They fail to appreciate the significance of terminology in constituting the social structures to which it refers: since the social structures of their own time are objective for them, people simply take for granted that it is the same with the social structures of the past. But since past terminology is no longer familiar, those past structures do not have the immunity to arbitrary interpretation inherent in the structures of one's own time. They do not exist independently of how they are described. Separated from the terminology that once allowed them to exist, they become protean and malleable.

To a greater or lesser extent, conventional historiography builds a wall between the terminology found in its sources and that to which readers are accustomed. Historians act as translators, which is considered unproblematic because it is thought that, like geological strata, history exists independently from the way it is narrated. Indeed, at first sight, what could be less changeable than the past? And if authors, such as historical sociologists, do not go back to primary sources at all any more but, in order to be able to 'get the big picture' and cover epochs in their entirety, rely on secondary literature, the phenomenon is compounded.

It will be already clear by now how this study proposes to proceed. The evolution of the social and political structures that existed before those with which we are familiar will be traced back over a long period. I have chosen a starting point that lies as far back as the sources allow, to wit the appearance of the Greek *pólis*. This is where the main,

[41] Wendt (1999: 75 [original emphasis]).

broader tradition of western civilization begins. As I said, social and political structures are based on widely shared assumptions. But they can only be widely shared if they are constantly being communicated. This may happen implicitly and/or non-verbally (through behaviour indirectly expressing assumptions, or through symbolic behaviour that enacts assumptions explicitly, or through other symbols). But much communication is verbal, and in cultures that have writing, records of verbal communication may remain at the disposal of later generations.

That is why we know quite a lot about, for example, Greek society as of 2,000 or 2,500 years ago, whereas we know much less about similarly ancient cultures, like those of the Etruscans, Macedonians, Phoinikians, or the Persians of the Achaimenid period, of whose own written records little or nothing survives. Of them, all we have are some inscriptions (which in the case of the Etruscans at present we cannot even read). What we know about those cultures we know from material remains, which of course are of very limited usefulness for reconstructing assumptions about social organization, and from texts written about them by outside observers, more precisely by Greeks and Romans, of whom, in stark contrast to those other cultures, western civilization still preserves an immense amount of textual material. This is precisely why we can speak of western civilization as one continuous civilization at all: it has a collective memory embodying written records stretching back about 2,700 years (3,200 if we include the Mykenian Greeks, after whom, however, there is a gap of about half a millennium devoid of written records; moreover, Mykenian script was only rediscovered in the nineteenth century and unreadable until the 1950s). In a sense, in its historical dimension western civilization is essentially a corpus of textual material handed down, and added to, from one period to the next and, in part, read in many of them.

Because of this textual tradition, and only because of it, we may hope to be able to reconstruct the assumptions underlying Greek and Roman society with some certitude—but not those of the Persians and Phoinikians, whom we shall forever see with Greek and Roman eyes. Not that information conveyed by Greek or Roman observers is worthless, but of course there is rather less of it and it is less reliable. It contains misperceptions that outside observers, often noticeably prejudiced, could not or indeed would not help, and often cannot be checked against terminology in the original language. Such terminology, however, has to be accessible in the form of a considerable amount of textual material if social structures, which are expressed using specific vocabulary, are to be reconstructed with any confidence.

There are of course cultures that are as old or older than Greek and Roman civilization and which have left quite substantial textual material, like the Mesopotamian cultures or pharaonic Egypt. This is not taken into consideration here because—like Mykenian Greek—it has not been part of any continuous textual tradition. Mostly, it was only rediscovered by nineteenth-and twentieth-century archaeologists, and became accessible only after (and if) it was deciphered, and then printed—the bulk of the vast amount of cuneiform inscriptions excavated to date is still waiting to be read, let alone published. However much the Greek world may have been influenced by the ancient oriental cultures the writings of those cultures have not become part of the textual tradition which alone enables us to speak of a continuous western civilization. The same is true of cultures still further removed geographically, like that of China. Here, too, we have a textual tradition that reaches back into the distant past, but it has begun only very recently to exert any influence on the 'west'.

I said that the 'broader' textual tradition of western civilization reaches back to the Greece of the early *pólis*. There is another tradition, oriented culturally towards Mesopotamia: the Old Testament. But although the Old Testament yields many insights about society in ancient Palestine and its cultural neighbourhood during the last millennium BCE, in terms of quantity it represents a drop in the ocean of extant Greek and Latin texts. Moreover, the Old Testament has become part of the western tradition only at a rather late stage: it exerted no influence on what was still the Graeco-Roman world before about the third century CE, and when it started to do so it was in Greek and Latin translation. From then on, it did play a significant role, but in the context, and through the prism, linguistic and otherwise, of the new cultural phenomenon of Greek and Latin christianity.

In what follows, the evolution of social structures and of the forms of political organization of western civilization will be examined, taking into account, and sometimes analysing in detail, the written sources that I consider significant (the selection of sources is of course arbitrary—meant to be illustrative, not exhaustive in the sense that no other, perhaps equally significant sources could be found). This endeavour is not based on any presuppositions concerning social structures, let alone (I hope) any 'discourse of eternity' and least of all on the concept of the state. Textual analysis is an essential feature distinguishing this approach from other contributions to the problem of structural change, like those mentioned above. Previous contributions have always adopted the point of view of the outsider observing seemingly objective social phenomena. Here, some effort, however tentative, will be made to view those phenomena from the 'inside'.

In addition, a major goal of this study is to relate structural change to the material constraints and opportunities that in any period provide the context in which social structures exist. As pointed out, structures are not determined by their material context, but they are not independent of it, either, indeed receiving major impulses and inputs from that side. However, only those material factors will be considered that themselves underwent change during the period under examination. Epigenetic factors may be important, but must be considered constant and hence cannot explain the *evolution* of social and political structures.

The focus is mainly on structures and only secondarily on recurrent processes or patterns within the framework that those structures provided. I try to bring out the terminology constituting the political structures of a given period, or at least to corroborate claims about those structures from textual sources. Our field of vision will, in principle, always be the civilization as a whole, the areas that culturally belonged to western civilization in a given stage of its development. Concretely, we shall study the Greek, then the Graeco-Roman world, followed by Latin (and to a lesser extent Greek) christendom, and finally post-Reformation christian Europe.

Since the point of this study is to understand the different epochs 'from the inside', preferring period terminology over our own, I also try to avoid labels reflecting our view of the various epochs rather than perceptions current at the time. For example, the very names now habitually given to epochs suggest that they were mere preludes of the present: 'antiquity', 'the middle ages', 'the early modern period'. It probably does not matter very much, but I prefer nevertheless to speak for example of 'Greek society' or of 'Latin christendom'. Those are not terms employed at the time, either, but they reflect somewhat more accurately how people at the time saw themselves. (Exceptionally, the expression *ancien régime*, which I employ for want of a better label, of course does not;

I justify this usage in Chapter 4.) Moreover, I have found that shunning expressions like 'antiquity' or 'medieval' is a good way of avoiding excessively broad generalizations. To be sure, christian society between the fifth and fifteenth centuries, for example, displays certain continuities that may justify treating the period as a single whole. On the other hand, it is also true that during this period there was a lot of change, sometimes so rapid that even conventional subdivisions like 'early/central/late middle ages' are still too broad. I have found it much better practice for dating purposes at least to give the century in question. Concerning chronology, it would of course be only consistent and, moreover, instructive to employ that of the cultures and communities being examined, to respect their way of situating themselves in time as much as their other terminology. It would, however, also be very cumbersome and make it difficult for readers to orient themselves on the time axis. Hence, in conformity with conventional historiographical practice, present-day western chronology is always used.

The study will end with the late eighteenth/early nineteenth century as a time when certain foundations of today's state had already been laid but that state was only just coming into existence. In the course of discussing the *ancien régime*, I shall explain in greater detail why we should not speak of 'states' before the nineteenth century, even though sources from the sixteenth century onwards already employ the word.

1.5 Key concepts

It remains to define some key concepts. I ask for indulgence if I omit situating the definitions that I propose in the debates of which they have been the object, or to defend them against definitions offered by such well-known authorities as Durkheim, Easton, Parsons, Schmitt, and Tönnies.

The 'state' we have dealt with already. By 'society' I mean the intersubjective commonality of expectations concerning human behaviour which allows individuals to predict with some accuracy how other individuals, whether personally known to them or not, will behave towards them in the given circumstances, and which thus makes it easier for them to decide how they themselves should behave. In the wider sense, 'society' also designates collectively all those sharing the expectations in question; in what follows this wider sense is usually the operative sense, but it presupposes the explanation just given. On this view, society is about potential interaction and only secondarily something to do with actual interaction. It is common to define society with reference to actual interaction. As I see it, this misses the essential point. Society enables or facilitates interaction, but does not consist in it. What it does consist in are reliable expectations. Thus, if I go somewhere I have never been, owing to my being part of society I still know, more or less, how to behave in a given situation and which behaviour to expect in reaction.

By far the largest part of all those individuals with whom this works I shall never see in my life. It is common, for example, to speak of 'German society', meaning society in the Federal Republic. That is a population of somewhat over eighty million. If society meant actual interaction and if I, as a member of society, were to interact with eighty million people at least once in my life, assuming a life expectancy of 80 years I would have to interact with an average of 2,740 hitherto unknown individuals every day. That

is impossible of course. However, membership in society does mean that I shall likely know how to behave regardless of *which* of those eighty million people I chance on, and that I am somewhat unlikely to be surprised by the way they behave towards me (even though that of course remains possible). The patterns of behaviour that society allows me to expect will often be of a cooperative nature, but this need not be the case. Mutual delimitation or indeed intergroup hostility may well be part of a given society—witness *apartheid* South Africa, or the southern USA before the 1960s. Even violent conflict can be part of society, in which case it will be the object of rules, indeed of ritual. In Chapter 2, we shall see how war in pre-Persian Greece was fought with heavy reliance on rules and ritual; another example closer in time is the highly ritualized practice of duelling to avenge insults that developed in post-Reformation Europe.

It may be objected that basing society on interaction does not require interaction of all members of society with all other members. Thus, Michael Mann defines society as 'a network of social interaction'.[42] Even though I interact only with relatively few people around me, does not the fact that they in turn interact with other people further removed from myself make me part of a network that may be called 'society'? But the image of the network to me seems unsuitable. The knots of a net are in direct contact only with their immediate neighbours and yet are an essential part of the whole. But they cannot alter their relative position within the network: people can. People do not necessarily stay in the same place for long but on the contrary often go somewhere they have not been before. The essence of society is precisely that it functions despite this mobility, indeed making it possible and promoting it. Society means that I can take my expectations of behaviour with me wherever I travel.

I emphasize that my usage differs strongly from the habitual usage. In my definition, society does not involve any form of bounded or organized community, least of all the state. On the contrary, in its basic form it is coextensive with humanity. Certain simple forms of standardized interaction are probably possible among all humans. This is especially true in today's world, which is unlikely still to contain individuals that do not know, or at least assume they know, at least a little about whatever other individuals they may encounter, enabling them to associate such individuals with more or less clearly defined groups or categories of which they have heard before. At least some information, even if incorrect, and thus expectations of behaviour can thus be assigned to all unknown individuals that may turn up in a given place. No part of humanity can still be newly discovered by any other part.

But even where this has happened, first contact seems normally to have been friendly or at least not violent—epigenetic factors may well be involved here. The classic example of a (likely) first contact is the description by Christopher Columbus of his encounters with native Americans in the Caribbean in the diary of his first voyage. Almost invariably, the natives are friendly and meet the Spaniards with offers of gifts (and vice versa); and this despite the fact that, as Columbus also notes, the natives would wage war on each other (entry for 11 October 1492). Only on three occasions (27 November, 3 December, and 13 January) do natives adopt a threatening posture, but are assuaged or (13 January) put to flight. None of the encounters during the first voyage result in casualties on one side or the other. Entirely in line with this, despite coming from a completely different

[42] Mann (1986: 13). The formulation seems somewhat unfortunate since the word 'social' actually means 'relating to society' and the definition thus seems to presuppose its object.

(Polynesian) cultural background, the first recorded landing by Europeans on Easter Island—by far the most isolated human habitat on the planet—by Dutch explorers on Easter day 1722 found the islanders both friendly and fearless: 'The natives were not afraid of us at all,' as one of the Dutch captains noted.[43] Nor did the Europeans behave aggressively towards the islanders.

Within this basic human society, more complex expectations of behaviour shared only by some people may evolve. Such clusters of denser expectations are an essential ingredient of what may be called 'cultures'. Unlike hospitality or at least neutrality *vis-à-vis* strangers, enmity is probably based on such more complex expectations. At first enmity probably stems simply from bad experience, which however will soon become part of socialization. The maxim 'beware of individuals of type X' is something learned (from experience or teaching). By contrast, the maxim 'beware of all strangers' would appear odd—total strangers cannot be seen as enemies, only people about whom something is known or believed known. Hence, even hostile interaction soon has a social (societal) aspect, namely the learned delimitation of the (collective) self from the (collective) other. In the only incident in the course of his first voyage that turns violent (13 January 1493), tellingly Columbus suspects from the start to be dealing with the supposedly very warlike, man-eating inhabitants of 'Caniba', of whom other natives, he believes to have understood, have warned him. According to his own description of the incident, he and his men behaved peaceably, but his prejudice may have influenced the behaviour of the Spaniards. Here, too, the interaction is at first peaceful, with the natives suddenly turning hostile.

Community of language is a cultural phenomenon as well as an expression of increased social (or societal) density. Language consists in phonemes combined according to certain rules. The acceptance and application of those rules in itself constitutes a considerable augmentation of reliable expectations of behaviour and, in turn, facilitates the passing on of further rules or expectations of behaviour in areas other than language. It thereby promotes further refinement of common patterns of behaviour. The more complex the interaction, the more important membership in groups united through precisely defined expectations of behaviour becomes.

Thus an organization—and this is what today's states are, just like firms or soccer clubs—presupposes a society with complex expectations of behaviour but does not create it (although it is true that states may help unify expectations of behaviour and thus promote cultures). In that sense, what is ordinarily meant by 'German society' is really the membership of an organization. Yet the borders of the FRG are not necessarily cultural boundaries, too. The German language is spoken not only in the FRG, just like English is also spoken outside the 'United Kingdom'. And there is much cultural commonality in Europe that transcends linguistic boundaries. Cultural boundaries will usually be fluid. It is possible to belong to cultures (marked e.g. by common language, religion, or origin) to a greater or lesser extent, and it is possible to belong to several cultures at once. As I define it, 'society' exists only in the singular, as a continuum within which there are demographic clusters sharing more complex expectations of behaviour, that is, cultures. If in this study I speak, for example, of 'Greek society', this does not imply the existence of more than one society but refers to the phenomenon of cultural community, of enhanced expectations of behaviour shared by groups within the larger

[43]Quoted Flenley and Bahn (2002: 3).

basic society—and of course it is equally possible to speak of 'German society' in this sense. As understood here, society never refers to 'bounded entities': bounded is precisely what society is not. (The concept of cultures will not in fact play a great role in what follows. Introduced here essentially as a by-product of my discussion of society, it serves to express the fact that society is of unequal density and heterogeneous—some groups of people share more expectations of behaviour than others, and different groups of people share somewhat different expectations.)

It is common nowadays to treat 'state' and 'society' as congruent, with a distinct 'society' corresponding to every 'state'. Neither term is usually defined, but the clear implication is that 'society' designates those living in a 'state'. Alexander Wendt articulates the link between the two: 'States and societies seem to be conceptually interdependent in the same way that masters and slaves are, or teachers and students; the nature of each is a function of its relation to the other . . . when states interact they do so with their societies conceptually "in tow".'[44] But as conceived here, society exists independently of constitutional forms and in particular does not presuppose either rule or political community. As we shall see, the relationship between society on the one hand and forms of political organization on the other varies greatly across time and across cultures and does not permit generalizations.

By 'politics' I mean the process of mediation between interests, opposed or complementary, of individuals or groups. This mediation may be either consensual or unilateral and authoritative and even coercive. It may, and often will, be institutionalized, but this is not necessary. As with the above definition of society, this definition of politics does not imply any fixed type of structures or organizational forms. Politics takes place wherever interests meet, as in today's world they do for example within families, within leisure associations, within or between firms, as well as within or between states.

Of course, from an abstract, impersonal social science perspective, the process of mediation of interests will be the more worthy of study the greater the number of individuals that it affects, and the broader the spectrum of interests involved. In today's world, the governmental apparatus of states are the agencies combining maximum ability to make and enforce decisions—and thus mediate interests—with the maximum number of individuals affected, and affected across a wide range of issues. This combination of effective, across-the-board decision-making authority and a broad demographic basis lets us see the state as the obvious arena of politics—although of course its very effectiveness and authority is, in turn, partly owed to the fact that we are socialized into seeing the state in this way through the current discourse of eternity. In other epochs it was different. To give only one example: in terms of membership the Roman Catholic church is still a larger entity than almost any state. Nevertheless, politically it is at present far less important than almost any state, because its ability to mediate effectively the interests, not just narrowly spiritual but across the board, of a great number of people is negligible. The opposite was true in pre-Reformation Latin christendom.

I employ the adjective 'political' to characterize the concepts associated with the process of mediating interests or with the structural framework within which this process takes place, especially if it affects a considerable number of people and if the spectrum of interests involved is broad. Political thinking deals with this process of mediation of

[44] Wendt (1999: 199, 201).

interests, with the structures within which it takes place, and with the kinds of interests at stake. It is similar with the adverb. For example, if I say, as I just did, that today's Roman Catholic church is 'politically' less important than the state, then that is because of its lesser role in mediating the interests of individuals and groups.

If I speak of political 'actors', I mean that such actors are—by their nature, that is, specifically, inherently, and durably—concerned with the mediation (and often the prior formulating and communicating) of interests, be they those of individuals or those of groups. Political actors may be individuals or they may consist of some institution; they may represent only themselves, or they may represent a collective. If they consist of an institution, the latter will almost certainly be the case.

Political 'communities' consist of individuals considering themselves and each other to share important interests across a range of issues. In the self-perception of those individuals, common interests as such will normally take second place to a common identity based on cultural attributes, from which they will be seen to derive. Such communities need not be exclusive in the sense that one can belong to only one at a time. Nor are they related to political actors in any fixed way. For example, they may match political actors one-to-one (as in the case of today's nation states, or rather their governments, since it is the latter that are the actual actors), or they may include plural autonomous actors (as with today's 'security communities', of which 'the west' is a prime example).[45]

Durably constituted, political actors and political communities are part of the structures created to enable the process of mediation of interests to take place, in other words, the 'political' structures. The term 'structures' encompasses organizations—synergetic associations of individuals for certain purposes and based on fixed, often written rules—and institutions in the sociological sense—associations perceived to be traditional and possibly based on some epigenetic predisposition, like marriage, the family, the clan. When I speak of 'social structures', I mean both political structures and others, not all social structures being political in nature. Certainly it would seem odd to attribute to institutions like marriage or organizations like the postal service the mediation of interests: even though this will take place within such structures, too, that is not their main purpose.

By 'rule' I mean the right to enforce the will of whoever exercises rule against those subject to him or her (or them). Rule is thus more than power, which consists merely in the ability to enforce one's will and which may be exercised ad hoc, on a case-by-case basis. By contrast, rule implies—in principle— the permanent ability to enforce one's will that is founded on acceptance of the right to do so by the ruled. Rule may be established through power (force, coercion); conversely, once established, it is a source of power. Nevertheless, the two are not synonymous. Note also that rule does not presuppose the existence of a community of the ruled, nor does it necessarily create such a community. Rule and community of the ruled may go together, but often do not.

If this is a long book, I hope I may say in my defence that at least it is not a boring one. My inability to make it any shorter (and I have tried hard) must owe something to authorial self-indulgence, but there are 'good' reasons for it, too. One is that by its nature

[45]The term 'security communities', denoting communities of political actors that settle their differences peacefully, was originally popularized by Karl Deutsch; for a recent treatment, see Adler, Barnett, and Smith (1998).

it cannot rely on 'Pavlovian' responses, using conventional shorthand references to things presumed known. This book presumes as little as possible and seeks to present evidence for all its claims, and more so as its claims are often unorthodox. I also eschew the wide-ranging generalizations by which other writers manage to condense the history of very long periods of time in relatively few pages. That kind of succinctness is of course much easier if it is believed that basic structural parameters will always remain constant, with change essentially affecting surface phenomena (e.g. there is always the 'state', whether it takes the form of the minuscule Greek 'city-state' or of the giant Roman empire). There is also a strong tendency to see the past as more or less static, as a punctuated equilibrium where basic parameters (structural, economic, or whatever) mostly stayed the same for generations, indeed centuries, interrupted only by rare episodes of obvious structural change. This book will demonstrate, on the contrary, that *throughout* the evolution of western civilization the pace of structural change has been surprisingly rapid, with the real picture thus far more complicated than conventional accounts suggest.

If certain structural parameters—more concretely, the 'state' and its attributes—are taken for granted, then it is not necessary to examine them in depth, or at all (instead they are simply projected onto the past). But once it is understood that they underwent constant change, their evolution has to be tracked. Even if this cannot be exhaustive, nevertheless it is not possible to leave major gaps, or the logic of this evolution becomes unintelligible. A major finding of this book will be that while there is no standard form of political organization, the evolution of political structures is path-dependent, meaning that structures in a given period are both historically contingent and historically conditioned. They can only be understood in the light of their antecedents: there is no timeless essence (or if there is, it is not the 'state').

Political structures are social universes: the lost social universes of the past, buried under the anachronistic terminology of present-day historiography, cannot be resurrected, even only partially, in a few lines. At the same time, history is not (only) made by abstract factors or institutional agents ('Athens' did x, 'the Hansa' did y, 'emerging capitalism' did z) but by human beings, and in whatever is said about the human past it should remain possible concretely to imagine the people who lived it and occasionally even shaped it: this presupposes describing their world with a minimum of detail. I suspect that I am not the only one to be irritated by the aloof (or indolent) refusal of many works of historiography to provide context. Whenever a place, a character, a concept, an event, or a sequence of events is introduced, enough information should be furnished to enable readers who may have never heard of the items in question, or who lack detailed knowledge of them, to understand what is being talked about without having to consult other sources of information.

This is especially necessary in a book like this, which is so wide-ranging in terms of eras, locations, and subjects covered that none of its prospective readers will be specialists regarding all of it. Moreover, concrete examples are often a better way to capture a period than abstract exposition; examples may mean more words, but also render the narrative less arid. Some key sequences of events (e.g. the fending off of the Persian attempt to establish control over mainland Greece in the early fifth century BCE, or the re-establishment of the western imperial dignity in 800) cannot be reduced to abstract factors at all but contain a surprisingly high and irreducible element of contingency, indeed of personal caprice. Throughout, the line between assuming too much knowledge

on the part of readers and garrulity is, of course, a fine one; I have endeavoured to the best of my ability not to lose sight of it.

Readers will notice that a large amount of specialist literature was processed to produce this book; nevertheless, in some instances almost certainly it was not enough. Yet if (as I fear it must) the book contains mistakes, I hope that at least they do not seriously vitiate the argument.

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2

Greeks and Romans

2.1 The material base of society and the threats facing it

The economic base of Greek and Roman society (and likewise of other city-dwelling cultures in the Mediterranean basin like the Phoinikians and Carthaginians) did not change substantially between the eighth century BCE and the great crisis of the Roman empire in the third century CE.[1]

2.1.1 Agriculture

The construction and upkeep of complex irrigation schemes such as those in Mesopotamia or the Nile valley required a high degree of coordination and cooperation among populations both quite large and densely packed in the irrigated areas. As the land surrounding those areas was often either too wet or too arid for cultivation, people could not easily evade attempts to establish coercive rule over them: Michael Mann speaks of 'cages' formed by the infrastructure on which they depended.[2]

In the Mediterranean region, dry farming and the resulting absence of such 'cages' made coercive rule a much more difficult proposition. Thinly scattered over the land—not least because the soil they worked was much less fertile than the artificially irrigated alluvial soil in Mesopotamia and along the Nile—farmers retained their autonomy. Dependent neither on the cooperation of a large number of people nor on large-scale immovable infrastructure, they could evade oppression simply by moving away. They were not concentrated along great rivers. The Nile valley, thickly settled and with a highly bureaucratic social organization, remained a cultural exception in the Mediterranean world not only in the pharaonic period, but also under Persian, Ptolemaic, and

[1] My discussion of the economics of the period owes much to Finley (1999). On the reception of this book, first publ. in 1973, see the foreword to the 1999 edited by Ian Morris; see also Andreau (1995); Pekáry (1976).

[2] Mann (1986: esp. 42, 80, 100, and *passim*).

Roman rule. The rest of the region was always settled sparsely, strikingly so by today's standards. The Roman empire at the beginning of our era, when it encompassed the entire Mediterranean basin, is thought to have reached a maximum of about fifty or sixty million inhabitants (seventy million according to a more generous estimate), of which perhaps eight million lived in the Nile valley. After this, it remained demographically stagnant before going into decline.[3]

With the possible exception of Egypt, economic organization was characterized by a striving for autarchy at the lowest possible level, i.e. for the smallest possible social unit. Most agriculture was subsistence farming. The importance of markets for supplying food and other basic needs, like clothing, was small, and fell steeply in proportion as distance from the place of production increased. Storable foodstuffs like grain, olive oil, salted fish, or wine were the objects of some supralocal maritime trade, but such trade played no role for feeding the vast majority of people. The same is true of other goods needed on an everyday basis.

Even large agricultural estates (which did not exist everywhere or to the same extent—very generally it may be said that their importance and size grew during the period under consideration) strove for self-sufficiency. Although they might produce for the market, this was not normally a priority. Extensive holdings of land were the source of often enormous wealth of their owners. But, excepting only a few areas for some stretches of time, such large holdings did not correspond to large-scale agriculture. Rather, they were divided up among a multitude of rent-paying tenants, and the wealth of the landlords resulted from the aggregate of small surpluses that the tenants produced.

Family farms, village communities, landlords' residences, and towns all remained largely self-sufficient. This autarchism was motivated by the difficulties and high cost of transport. Moving goods on land was prohibitively expensive. Pack and draught animals made slow progress on often difficult roads, but had to be fed every day. Even at relatively short distances, the expense of fodder alone quickly constituted so large a proportion of the value of the goods carried as to make it impossible to compete with goods that could be produced locally even if the cost of production was higher. Maritime transport was not cheap, either, not least because of the danger of shipwreck or attack by pirates. This danger caused creditors—usually, rich landowners—to charge high interest on the loans that traders took out to finance their ships and cargoes. Traders rarely owned their ships, one manifestation of many of strikingly low capitalization of mercantile activities throughout the period. To be sure, in case of shipwreck creditors would often forfeit their loans—in other words, the high interest payable on such 'bottomry' loans included an insurance premium. This meant that they might be advantageous even for traders who had enough capital of their own. But it does not counter the impression of generally low capitalization: 'insurance fraud' would have been very tempting had it not been easy to keep track of ships, suggesting that they must have been relatively few. Indeed, most Greek shipowners owned exactly *one* ship. G. E. M. de Ste. Croix suggests that even in the fifth century BCE, when shipbuilding and navigation techniques had much improved (and my impression is that they improved little afterwards), '[t]he poverty of most traders . . . was still a very serious handicap.' The point of maritime loans, according

[3]Finley (1999: 30, 97); Mann (1986: 266). Cf. the comparison of different estimates in Ausbüttel (1998: 2).

to de Ste. Croix, was 'to *spread the considerable risks of commerce* over the much larger and richer landowning class'.[4]

Still, transport on water was cheaper and more lucrative than transport on land. Since navigable rivers were few, long-distance trade was mostly maritime trade. But it did not serve to fulfil basic needs. Only very few cities could afford to depend on imported grain. (It is generally assumed that the main cereal of the period was wheat, but in fact, barley may have been as common or more common at least in the Greek world.)[5] The prerequisite for reliance on imported grain was supralocal power, needed to secure transport routes; besides, it might make it possible to pass on part of the cost of the imports to subjects. Significant reliance on grain imports was thus only possible if backed by maritime dominance, and it occurred only in three instances—Athens in its heyday (fifth/fourth century BCE), Rome, and finally, after 330, Constantinople. The actual degree of dependence of the Athenians on grain imports seems impossible to determine. Estimates vary wildly, and it has even been contested that there was any dependence at all.[6]

Confusingly, referring to the situation in the second half of the fifth century BCE, Thukydídês has Alkibiádês claim that Syracuse was better off than Athens because it imported no grain, but earlier he has Periklḗs boast that the Athenians had 'in every manner' made Athens 'the most self-sufficient *pólis* in peace as well as war'.[7] Other Greek cities imported grain, too, but were clearly even less dependent on it. When the Lakedaimonians blockaded the ports of the Peloponnese for many years after 431 BCE, this caused no famine anywhere that we know of.[8] Whereas the Athenians apparently bought their grain at normal prices, Rome partly obtained it through taxation in kind or through what in pre-Reformation England would have been called purveyance, obliging suppliers to sell it at fixed, low prices. The grain was transported to Rome by private shipowners paid from public money and was distributed cheaply or even free of charge. This system, developed already under the rule of the senate and later extended (and, after 330, copied for Constantinople), could only function if underpinned by military dominance, and even so was too expensive and economically irrational to be practised widely. Generally, food was produced locally. Although food shortages were not uncommon, famine was[9]—not least, no doubt, because almost everywhere the population density was so low.

2.1.2 Craftsmen, traders, and bankers

With few exceptions of cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants (Alexándreia, Antiócheia, Athens, Carthage in the Roman period, Rome, after 330 Constantinople), by far the greatest part of the towns of the pre-christian Graeco-Roman world were 'extremely small'.[10] They normally had a population of only a few thousand, or indeed a few hundred. For that reason alone, their external trade links cannot have been very

[4]Pekáry (1976: 25); de Ste. Croix (1974: 43 [original emphasis]).

[5]Sallares (1991: esp. 315–16).

[6]Cf. e.g. Finley (1999: 133); Garnsey (1988: 104–5); Hopper (1979: 89–92); Sealey (1993: 24–6).

[7]Thukydídês 6.20, 2.36 (*tên pólin tois pási pareskeuásamen kai es pólemon kai es eirḗnên autarkestátên*).

[8]Kagan (1969: 348).

[9]Garnsey (1988: esp. x).

[10]Cameron (1993: 153).

significant. It is true that certain things—such as wood, metals, salt—had often to be imported, but mostly those things were to be had easily and in many places, and if their supply was temporarily interrupted that posed no immediate threat to society.

The citizens of the (more or less) urban communities of the period were almost invariably farmers; conversely, the right to own land was limited to citizens. It is a fundamental characteristic of Graeco-Roman civilization that it was urban, and yet at the same time run pretty much exclusively by landowners. Even if the elite did not work the land themselves (but they often did), their income derived from it: during the entire period under examination (eighth century BCE to third century CE), the possession of land remained by far the most important source of wealth. Craftsmen and traders enjoyed little prestige. Occasionally someone from their ranks might rise to prominence. But, in general, even collectively they had little political influence. Associations of craftsmen or traders existed but played no political role in their communities, in contrast to the guilds and supralocal associations of traders of Latin christendom. Both manual labour and commerce were seen as socially inferior, unworthy of respectable citizens. 'In the old days', Aristotle remarks in the fourth century, 'in fact the artisan class [*to bánauson*] in many a *pólis* consisted of slaves or foreigners, owing to which the great mass of such people are so even now; and the best-ordered [*beltístê*] *pólis* will not make an artisan [*bánausos*] a citizen.'[11]

In practice craftsmen might well have citizenship, but Aristotle disapproved, and he was certainly not alone (craftsmen and traders always remained excluded from citizenship in Lakedaímôn). Thukydídês notes that towards the end of the fifth century, when Athens was at war with the Peloponnesians, more than 20,000 Athenian slaves deserted, 'most of them craftsmen [*cheirotéchnai*]'—a figure that seems implausibly high, but which again underlines the role played by slaves in non-agricultural production.[12] Since, in contrast with Latin christendom and post-Reformation Europe, there were no machines to tap the cheap kinetic energy provided by water and wind—a major limitation on the economy of the period that we shall discuss in more detail in Chapter 4—production could not be mechanized to any significant degree. Throughout the period, workshops remained small, as did their output.

The strongest prejudice was directed against traders. Aristotle regards their activities as unnatural.[13] Commerce was for the underclass or for outsiders. Respectable citizens would not engage in it openly, but only covertly as investors of capital. The import of grain to Athens, clearly quite substantial in the fifth and fourth centuries BCE, was largely in the hands of non-citizens.[14] Since 218 BCE, senators in Rome were forbidden to run a business. A passage by Cicero (106–43) expresses the contempt of the Roman upper class for anything to do with artisanal production, commerce, and money lending, liberally employing the word *sordidus* 'dirty'. In the same breath, Cicero lavishes praise

[11] Aristotle, *Politiká* 1278*a* 6 (1944: 197; modified). Ibid. 1267*b* Aristotle discusses Phaléas, who in his project for an ideal *pólis* wanted all craftsmen to be publicly owned slaves. Aristotle, however, advises to use such slaves only on public property or for public works (the word he employs, *ta koiná*, can mean either).

[12] Thukydídês 7.27. For a discussion of slave numbers in Athens and elsewhere (and the fact that the sources persistently exaggerate them) see Sallares (1991: 53ff.). According to this, 20,000 would appear to be a plausible maximum for the total slave population of Athens.

[13] Aristotle, *Politiká* 1257*a*.

[14] Finley (1999: 60).

on farming, 'than which nothing is better, nothing more fruitful, nothing more sweet, nothing more becoming to a free man'.[15]

An extensive network of trade relations existed, and some goods that are easy to trace archaeologically were demonstrably distributed over vast areas and distances. But what older and indeed much recent literature overlooks is the fact that this says nothing about the *volume* of trade and its relative economic importance. On closer inspection, the usual (and usually unreflected) view that trade was as important to society at the time as it is to today's society will not hold up. Similarly, financial services were little developed. Loans were mostly granted privately and not by specialized institutions. Such institutions existed: temples, private individuals, and from about the third century BCE municipal agencies founded for this purpose accepted interest-bearing deposits[16] and granted loans. But it seems that the sums in question were moderate and that the phenomenon was of secondary importance in comparison with loans granted by people with surplus wealth that did not result from deposits.

Supralocal 'capital markets' and cashless money transfers—the latter, as we shall see, being of immense importance to the development of trade in Latin christendom—have been posited for this period. But there seems to be no conclusive evidence that they existed, and if they did they cannot have played much of a role. Unlike Latin christendom after about 1200, trade in the Graeco-Roman world could not be financed by negotiable papers and the added monetary mass resulting from them. Money consisted almost exclusively in metal currency, the monetary mass in circulation was quite limited, coins were often in short supply. After they had been invented, that is: money in the form of coins did not exist before the seventh century, and Rome for example minted no coins before the third century CE. Before, but to a considerable extent afterwards, too, trade was essentially barter trade, though metal in the form, for example, of ingots or of iron spits could be used as payment.

The volume of trade had to be correspondingly small: there was not enough money to pay for more trade goods. Conversely, in Latin christendom from at least the twelfth century onwards, the monetary mass was augmented by credit, and, through mutual stimulation, its volume increased in tandem with trade. Likewise, as far as I can see, rulers in the ancient Mediterranean world were never seriously in debt. This really means that their activities were *restricted* by the non-availability, for practical and normative reasons, of credit. In an economy without major banks, and where richer and socially higher-ranking persons lent to poorer and socially inferior people, there was no one to lend money to people at the top of the social ladder. Commonwealths—which, as we shall see, did not exist as corporations or juridical persons—also went into debt only exceptionally. They might 'borrow' money from their own citizens, by voting dues that were to be paid back later. As a cross between taxation and credit financing this practice of course did not require 'capital markets' or specialized financial institutions.

Power and landownership went together. It was impossible to be both powerful (or at least politically important) and poor—quite unlike the princes of late Latin christendom and the post-Reformation *ancien régime*, who often pushed mountains of debt before them and sometimes literally pawned their crowns. People who made money in business

[15] *nihil est agri cultura melius, nihil uberius, nihil dulcius, nihil homine libero dignius.* Cicero, *De officiis* 1.150–1.

[16] See e.g. Matthew 25.26–7 (1st cent.).

would hasten to convert their assets into the more prestigious form of landholdings. Wealth thus invariably turned agricultural no matter where it originally came from, which must be an important reason for the low capitalization of commercial activities mentioned earlier. There was no equivalent of the great dynasties of merchants and bankers of late Latin christendom and post-Reformation Europe, whose family firms would remain prominent from one generation to the next.

This is not to say that trade and other non-agricultural economic activities were unimportant in the period or that they generated no wealth. However, they did not play the economic and social role to which, from more recent historical experience, we are accustomed. In interpreting the usually insufficient information on the subject that period sources provide, we must beware of extrapolating on the basis of this more recent experience. For example, Thukydídês in the fifth century explains that the Corinthians had become 'powerful through money [*chrêmasi dynatoí*]' on account of their function as an *empórion*, a trading post, since at first all traffic of goods to and from the Peloponnese took the land route over the isthmus of Corinth, and when navigation increased goods would be transshipped at Corinth so as not to have to circumnavigate the Peloponnese.[17] But we must not rashly conclude from this that the economy of Corinth was based on trade.

J. B. Salmon has examined what we know about the history of Corinth down to 338 BCE. What his monograph illustrates in the first place is how very little it is still possible to ascertain about the socio-economic arrangements of a Greek polity of the period, even one so important as Corinth with its (perhaps) up to 70,000 inhabitants, rural population included.[18] But it is likely that the financial revenue (*chrêmátôn prósodos*) of which Thukydídês speaks was mainly gained from fees, especially for using the *díolkos*. This was a dragway, probably constructed soon after 600; it consisted of carts running in stone tracks for hauling goods, and sometimes entire ships, between the two ports that Corinth had on the isthmus. Insofar as the citizens themselves—and not metics (resident foreigners) or outsiders—engaged in trade, the sparse evidence indicates that it was quite limited. Salmon suggests that maritime trade, like artisanal production and other non-agricultural, salaried activities, was a temporary occupation of citizens that normally worked their land, or an occupation engaged in by other members of their families, in order to supplement their income.[19] Metics, by definition, were a socially inferior part of the population and not normally wealthy.

A more familiar example of the misinterpretation of the role of commerce in the period is the persistent cliché of Carthage as a 'trading power'. In his study on the subject, Walter Ameling categorically dismisses the notion that the upper class of Carthage were merchants, pointing out that whereas there is 'not a single piece of evidence' to suggest that upper class Carthaginians 'derived profit from commerce or business', all information that we do possess about where their wealth came from indicates landownership as its source, just as in the Greek and Roman world.[20] Ameling refutes the generally accepted view that the delimitation of spheres of influence in the Mediterranean agreed between Carthage and Rome—in a treaty recorded by Polýbios but impossible to date

[17] Thukydídês 1.13.
[18] Salmon (1984: 168).
[19] Salmon (1984: 155).
[20] Ameling (1993: 169); my trans.

precisely—was motivated by trade interests.[21] According to Ameling, the Carthaginians had no commercial policy, for the simple reason that their trade was not that important.[22] It existed, and period observers found it sufficiently remarkable for extant sources to allude to it quite frequently (if invariably in a fashion that does not tell us very much about it). But the bold inferences drawn from such sources have not taken into account that what at the time appeared to be quite busy trade may still have been very little by the standards of later ages.

'Mercantilism', let alone 'economic' war was unknown. Economic rivalry figures, sometimes prominently, in present-day historiography dealing with the period, but that is an anachronistic projection.[23] Conversely, if given the economic structures of the period war could not be waged to promote or protect trade, what those structures in a sense did promote was war for booty. The latter kind of warfare is not rational among economically interdependent actors, but since such interdependence scarcely existed in our period, there was no economic reason not to profit from the riches of others by stealing from them rather than trading with them.[24]

2.1.3 Limited economic role of warfare: the case of Corinth

It is clear from the preceding paragraph that society could not be threatened by interrupting commerce. Inasmuch as warfare had that effect, it posed no significant danger for society. But, on account of the limited technological development of the Mediterranean world, even the local effects of warfare must not be overrated. The infrastructure underpinning society was not very complex and did not require much capital investment, owing to which it was easy to replace if destroyed. On the other hand, destroying it was not easy. Like the economy, the warfare of the period relied almost exclusively on human and animal muscle, slightly enhanced here and there with the help of simple machines. Warships were the biggest and most complicated war machines of the period, and they illustrate the point under discussion well: in combat, moving them required the exertion of hundreds of oarsmen, since their destructive impact consisted in ramming the adversary—employing warships under sail, as became common in post-Reformation Europe, presupposed the long-range destructive power of gunpowder. Warships could only destroy one another (or at most other ships), not attack objects on land. Nor was other technology available on land to damage material infrastructure substantially.

As far as I can see, authors of the period never discuss or even allude to the macroeconomic consequences of armed conflict. Quite frequently, by contrast, their accounts note the destruction of local and, in particular, agricultural resources. Fields could be burned, vinyards uprooted, olive trees cut down. But to do such things systematically and on a large scale was impossible for strategic and technical reasons. Basing herself on her own research and that of earlier authors, Lin Foxhall concludes that 'attacks on crops would almost never actually threaten a city's food supply.' The point of such attacks, which could only cause significant damage to individuals or, at most, village communities,

[21] Ameling (1993: 141–54).
[22] Ameling (1993: 265–74).
[23] Finley (1999: 158, 204); Manicas (1982: 679–80).
[24] This is emphasized by Michel Austin (e.g. 1993: 219). William Harris (1979: ch. 2) sees the prospect of booty as an important motive of Roman expansionism.

was that even the prospect of such damage would produce tension within the citizen body concerned. That was the result, for example, of the pillaging of Attiké by the Lakedaimonians from 431 BCE onwards, recorded by Thukydídês: ensconced behind the walls of their capital, the Athenians—rural population included, but even the townspeople had plots in the country—start squabbling as soon as the raiders appear.[25]

The destruction of Corinth by the Romans in 146 BCE, frequently referred to by historians albeit usually in passing, seems paradigmatic of the overestimation of the damage that warfare of the period could inflict. The way this is written about by historians regularly suggests that Corinth physically vanished. Thus, according to Andrew Lintott, it was 'razed to the ground', and virtually the same formulation is employed in German by Werner Dahlheim (*dem Erdboden gleichgemacht*). Similarly, there is near-unanimity that the inhabitants, to the extent that they survived, were sold wholesale into slavery. Thus, Alfred Heuss, in his standard Roman history, notes that 'the [!] inhabitants' of Corinth were 'led into slavery'. Even so respected and usually critical an authority as the *Kleine Pauly (Lexikon der Antike)* declares that 'the [!] population' was 'exterminated or sold into slavery'.[26]

Yet the idea of Roman legionaries or some other workforce spending weeks or indeed months to reduce a rather large settlement to rubble with fire and pick-axe—the only means available—seems implausible. James Wiseman expresses amazement at the scholarly consensus on the supposedly total destruction of the city, which according to this standard view remained uninhabited until it was refounded in 46 BCE. 'Few of the buildings excavated, in fact, can be shown to have been subjected to the great violence that has customarily been associated with the plundering of Corinth in 146 BC.' Wiseman points out that only late sources or those likely to contain poetic or rhetorical exaggeration talk about complete destruction and abandonment (which clearly was not total, cf. e.g. Cicero *Tusculanae disputationes* 3.22, about his own visit to Corinth in about 75 BCE).[27] Wiseman discusses the fate of the buildings, not that of the inhabitants at the time of the Roman attack. But here, too, the sources that speak of systematic or at any rate large-scale enslavement of the population cannot be considered reliable. In his monograph on *Mass enslavement of the inhabitants of conquered towns in the Hellenistic and Roman period*, Hans Volkmann notes disapprovingly that the sources frequently mention the destruction and plundering of Corinth, but not the 'mass enslavement' of the inhabitants.[28] With some probability, the explanation is that no mass enslavement took place.

Polýbios' *History* contained an eyewitness account of the conquest of the city, but this part of the text is not extant.[29] A detailed account, however, which I suspect can only be based on Polýbios, is also provided by Pausanías, who wrote in the second century CE.[30] According to Pausanías, when the army of the Achaian confederation had been defeated by the Romans near Corinth, the surviving Achaian troops fled, 'as did most of the Corinthians themselves'. The Romans found the city undefended, its gates open. Fearing an ambush, their commander Mummius nevertheless made his troops wait for three

[25] Foxhall (1993: 141); cf. Garlan (1989: 96–9); Thukydídês 2.21.
[26] Dahlheim (1994*b*: 92), Lintott (1993: 10), Heuss (1998: 121), and LdA 'Korinthos' (Ernst Meyer).
[27] Wiseman (1979: 491–4).
[28] Volkmann (1990: 31).
[29] Cf. Strábôn 8.6.23.
[30] Pausanías 7.16.7–9.

days before storming the city and 'burning' it (*ékaie*). Nothing is said of any resistance. Pausanías reports that 'most of those left behind' were killed by the Romans, though Mummius had the women and children sold into slavery, as well as those slaves that had been set free to reinforce the Achaian army and who had apparently been captured by the Romans. According to this narrative, then, which seems both well informed and inherently plausible, only a fraction of the original population was killed or enslaved.

The notion of a 'mass' enslavement is, again, only found in late sources. There is a brief remark in Iustinus that 'the entire people' (of Corinth) was sold into slavery to intimidate the defeated Greeks.[31] Iustinus, who was active in the second or third century CE, has left an abridged version of the *History* of Pompeius Trogus, which itself must date from the second half of the last century BCE. Perhaps, then, the notion of wholesale enslavement of the Corinthians was already current at that time, though Pausanías did not take it up. The *Roman history* of Kássios Díôn, written in the third century CE, also apparently spoke of mass enslavement, although we no longer have Kássios' text for the relevant part of the book. We can only surmise what he wrote from the chronicle of Iôánnês Zônáras, a twelfth-century court official in Constantinople, who based himself on Kássios for the events in question. According to Iôánnês,[32] after the Achaian defeat the surviving Corinthians were scattered over the territory of their city (*katá tên chṓran eskedásthêsan*), with the rest of the defeated army, i.e. the non-Corinthians, fleeing 'home' (*hoi d'álloi oíkade éphygon*). 'As a result the Corinthians behind the city walls believed that all had perished and left the city, too, and Mummius captured it empty of men.' According to Iôánnês, Mummius proceeded to sell the inhabitants into slavery, to confiscate the land, and to 'destroy all walls and other buildings'.

How, one wonders, could he sell the inhabitants if the city was empty? Iôánnês:

> In order that no Corinthian might remain hidden nor any of the other Greeks be sold as a Corinthian, Mummius, before announcing what was to happen, convoked all those present [*synekálese pántas tous paróntas*], had them covertly surrounded by soldiers, and then declared that the other Greeks would go free, but the Corinthians would be enslaved. Then he ordered all those attending [*parestêkótes*] to be taken into custody and was thus able to separate them reliably.

Are we to believe, on the basis of a text written 400 years after the event and not preserved, but only echoed by someone writing another 900 years or so later, that the freshly defeated Greeks would voluntarily have placed themselves within reach of the conqueror and his troops? Troops that, as both Pausanías and Iôánnês explicitly record, had just looted Corinth? Who was less likely to do so than the Corinthians themselves, let alone in their entirety, as Iôánnês implies? What kind of assembly would have been attended, in this situation, not just by all Corinthians, but in addition by a large number of 'other Greeks'? Either the Corinthians or the 'other Greeks' could not have been 'present' before the assembly was convoked, but the word employed has no other meaning. And how would the identity of the 'attendees' (*parestêkótes*) have been ascertained, given that in light of what Mummius had just told them the Corinthians would surely not have declared it voluntarily? The peace terms imposed by the Romans on the Achaian confederation included the dissolution of that organization; this was

[31] Iustinus 34.2.
[32] Iôánnês Zônáras 9.31.

presumably announced at a meeting of its representatives. The assembly that Iôánnês has take place at Corinth may be a confused echo of that event.

The implicit idea that adult male Corinthians were enslaved may indicate unfamiliarity on Iôánnês' part with slavery in the period under discussion. Pausanías has the Romans kill the male inhabitants of Corinth still found there; in his account it is the women and children that are enslaved. This was common practice in the Graeco-Roman world. Grown men would have been difficult to force into submission and would have attempted to flee from their owners at the first opportunity. Women were more easily coerced and, perhaps more importantly, were unlikely to flee: female travellers without male companions would have aroused immediate suspicion. Most male slaves of the period would have been born such and had no other home to return to.[33]

It is remarkable how uncritically the simplistic view of 'complete' destruction and enslavement is perpetuated even by recent authors, as is the fact that they generally omit an important piece of information on which Pausanías and Iôánnês agree—that when the Romans attacked the city it was undefended and largely deserted. What makes the case of Corinth special—and this is probably what the legend of its physical annihilation expresses as it were metaphorically—is that the city was indeed extinguished, if only politically. When Mummius in an extant inscription speaks of Corinth having been 'destroyed' or 'wiped out' (*Corinto deleto*),[34] what he means is presumably that it ceased to be a *pólis*. The land of its citizens was partly given to the citizens of nearby Sikyṓn, the rest became common property of the citizens of Rome (*ager publicus*) and was presumably let to tenants.[35] To be able to decree this and implement it durably was in itself a spectacular testimony to the conqueror's power.

Warfare in the period could be very brutal—especially if, unlike Corinth, a fortified place was captured with its unsuccessful defenders inside. But the above discussion of the fate of Corinth in 146 BCE and the way it is reflected in the academic literature should serve as a warning not to be too credulous of certain claims found in that literature. In assessing tales of atrocities and destruction, the reliability of the available sources must be a prime criterion. The relative difficulty of inflicting material destruction (compared to what we are accustomed to) helps explain what many present-day authors have found odd, to wit, that period observers display little fear or rejection of warfare as such. They did not see it as a social problem—even though they regarded domestic, civil, war as a very serious *political* problem.

2.2 Rule and society

2.2.1 The Greek world until the conquest of the Persian empire

2.2.1.1 *The Establishment of the* pólis *as a political cooperative*

The Homeric epics that probably date back to the eighth century BCE allow some glimpses of social and political structures based essentially on personal association, like the retinues of landowning magnates of the kind populating the *Iliad*. Sometimes bearing the title

[33] Cf. Murray (1993: 42–3).
[34] Degrassi, *Inscriptiones latinae liberae rei publicae* 122, quoted Harris (1979: 52).
[35] Strábôn 8.6.23; Cicero, *De lege agraria* 1.5.

'king' (*basileús*), by today's standards they were little more than wealthy farmers. Homer has king Odysseús challenge someone to a ploughing contest ('I would that there were oxen to drive . . . and the soil should yield before the plow: then should you see me, whether or not I could cut a straight furrow to the end'). While waiting for his return, his wife queen Pênelópê spends her days at the loom. Nausikáa, the daughter of the king of the Phaiaks, does the laundry on a riverbank in the company of her maids; she drives there in a mule-drawn wagon, with herself holding the reins.[36] Heródotos says of a *basileús* at Lebaíê in Macedon that 'the king's wife cooked their food for them [the royal herdsmen]; for in old times the ruling houses [*tyrannídes*] among men, and not the commonalty [*dêmos*, the 'people'] alone, were lacking in wealth.' As Thukydídês' remarks on the flight of Themistoklês to the king of the Molossians in about 465 indicate, similar conditions were still found on the periphery of the Greek world even in Heródotos' lifetime, that is, in the fifth century BCE.[37] Supported by personal followers, such early magnates waged 'war'—but in their own name, not in the name of any political community.[38] Thus the driving force of the Trojan war as described in the *Iliad* is the vanity and wounded pride of certain high-ranking male individuals, not the interests of any community associated with them. To be sure, they consult with the *dêmos*, the 'people'—but in the *Iliad* this means the assembly of warriors, and it is the leadership of the magnates which presumably constituted this *dêmos* in the first place.

We shall never be able to tell with any certainty just how faithful a reflection the Homeric epics are of 'real', historical political structures (the topic has been the subject of much perspicacious discussion)—but they do provide a convenient template against which to measure the political evolution of the period that followed, from the eighth to the sixth century. This period saw the triumph of the 'classical' *pólis*, often created by merging, physically or at least administratively, several villages. In Greek this was called *synoikismós*, a 'settling together'. It should be noted that the Greeks (like the Romans) made no legal distinction between 'town' and 'country'. The most remote Attic village was as much 'Athens' as the *akrópolis*. It was not entirely uncommon for a community of citizens to have no urban centre—never complete, the 'settling together' from which such a centre often arose might not take place at all. Occasionally, such a community is referred to not as a *pólis* but as an *éthnos*, a 'people'. But an *éthnos*, too, would have institutions similar to those of a *pólis*, and the distinction to me seems to be of no great significance. Lakedaímôn, always described as a *pólis*, lacked an urban centre. The 'capital', Spártê, consisted of five unfortified villages, four of them within sight of each other, the fifth an hour's walk distant.

The *synoikismós* sometimes occurred prior to the evolution of the *pólis* in the sense of the specific type of communal organization that the term came to designate. This evolution seems to have been a process in which the original single leader of the community was gradually stripped of his powers. Eventually, the office of this leader or 'king' was generally abolished. Originally inherited for life, his powers came to be divided among several people and were increasingly split up into separate offices. The circle of potential holders of such offices was gradually widened, and methods were found to let the offices rotate, such as allowing them to be held only for a limited period (eventually, typically a year).

[36]Homer, *Odyssey* 18.365–75 (1995: ii 229); 1.356–8; 2.97–8, 104; 6.81–92.
[37]Heródotos 8.137 (1920–5: iv 143); Thukydídês 1.136.
[38]Garlan (1972: 12).

In Homer (*Iliad* 1.238–9, 2.205–6), Zeus is said to have given the Greek leaders their ceremonial staff (*skêptron*), as well as *thémistes*: customary laws, usages, basic precepts, commonly regarded as divine. They were thus not decisions by the people, such decisions being commonly referred to in the later *pólis*-world as *nómoi*, 'laws', or *psêphísmata*, decisions voted—the verb is *psêphízomai*—by the citizens. And in *Iliad* 2.205, Odysseús sternly reminds Thersítês, who has dared to criticize king Agamémnôn, that leaders have their authority from Zeus. Yet, even in Homer, the decisions of the leaders have to be ratified first in their council, then by the assembly of their armed followers, a procedure that anticipates the later *pólis*. There, the social order was not seen as an expression of divine will or divine law (the usual legitimation of status differences in pre-industrial society, including in later phases of western civilization). Rather, it was considered the result of law created by the community itself. To be sure, the ever-conservative Lakedaimonians traced *their* constitution to a divine oracle, called the 'great *rhêtra*'—to the extent that that constitution was not attributed to their mythical (but human) lawgiver Lykúrgos, who incidentally also commissioned the *rhêtra*. And the *rhêtra* itself, short, rather cryptic, and impossible to date as it is, actually provides for all decisions of the community to be laid before the assembly of the citizens. Law, impersonal but *not* immutable, expressing the volition of those subject to it rather than that of a deity or a ruler claiming to act on the deity's behalf, was the mainstay of the *pólis*.

In principle, the *pólis* was no longer a spontaneous, 'natural' community, but a community based on, and created by, abstract, impersonal law. In practice, it remained very largely a community of descent. Legally, however, only the expectancy of citizenship was hereditary, not citizenship as such. Citizen status was bestowed on young men in a formal ceremony, following an examination of their credentials; conversely, it was customary to review the citizen lists periodically and to eliminate anyone considered unworthy.[39] The *pólis* substituted personal allegiance with rights and duties vis-à-vis an abstraction, the citizen body (*politeía*). Personal rule (and the retinues that went with it) was replaced by a form of political organization which, as will be discussed later on, really constituted a cooperative and thus the antithesis of rule. This transition is not easy to explain, given that records from the period in which it took place are not abundant.

The process was no doubt helped by the invention of the Greek alphabet. Egyptian hieroglyphs as well as the cuneiform scripts of the Mesopotamian or Mesopotamian-influenced cultures contain both ideographic elements (characters signifying words) and phonographic elements (characters signifying sounds, usually syllables). Such scripts had very numerous and complicated characters. By contrast, Greek from at least the eighth century onwards was written using an alphabet, its characters few and simple. The Greek alphabet was based on that of the Phoinikians, but improved on it through the systematic notation not just of consonants but of all vowels as well. Henceforth, any word could be represented both conveniently and, especially in comparison with other scripts, with striking precision using a mere twenty-four characters. Learning them was easy. They could in principle be mastered by all, not just by an intellectual elite or a specialized caste of scribes that had, or was provided, the leisure and resources for the lengthy training required by other scripts. Given the role that written law played for the evolution of the *pólis*—it is only by writing it down that law becomes (relatively) objective and impersonal—the availability of a writing system accessible to all may have

[39] Meyer (1976: 71), cf. Aristotle, *Politiká* 1275*a*.

been a condition of the possibility of this form of social organization. In fact, it was not just the law that was written down, but everything that had anything to do with issues touching the community as a whole or its subgroups or individual members. It is scarcely possible to visit excavated sites from the *pólis*-world without encountering inscriptions at every turn. Their often humdrum character suggests that, starting quite soon after the appearance of the script itself, literacy was astonishingly widespread.[40]

If literacy helped the process, what started it may have been the development of the hoplite phalanx.[41] The *polítai*, the citizens of the *pólis*, formed their own army, or at least its essential core. Hoplites had to supply their own equipment, which meant that although non-citizens could be hoplites, the poor could not. The equipment consisted of a helmet, greaves, a lance, a sword, and the heavy round shield or *hóplon* which gave hoplites their name. A metal cuirass may have been included at first, but if so it had been abandoned by the time the Persians arrived on the scene around 500 BCE.[42] Instead, a harness of linen reinforced with glue seems to have been customary—it is mentioned repeatedly in the *Iliad*, presumably documenting the practice of the eighth century, but was also worn by Alexander of Macedon in the battle of Gaugámêla (perhaps Gomal in what is now Iraq) in 331 BCE.[43] This hoplite armour was expensive, but, once iron came into general use (as it had by the eighth century), less so than the older bronze armour. The bronze armour already points to a comparatively egalitarian form of warfare—hand-to-hand fighting in fairly dense formation. Heavy armour made sense only if the closeness of the combatants compensated for the fact that they could not move very fast, for example to run for safety. This form of infantry warfare culminated in the hoplite phalanx, a formation of warriors advancing side by side, their ranks tightly closed, whose triumph in the seventh century is coeval with the consolidation of the *pólis* as a political cooperative. Heavy armour was not suitable for cavalry, since stirrups were unknown during the entire period considered in this chapter and mounted warriors with heavy armour would have been easy to throw off their horses; in any case, horses in the Greece of that period were apparently too small and weak to carry both a man *and* heavy armour. Probably because of the scarcity of arable, cavalry warfare played little role in the *pólis*-world. Raising horses meant giving over much arable to grazing, which in many places was out of the question.[44]

The hoplite phalanx was almost impossible to overcome by troops employing different armour and tactics. Practically invincible if met head on, and therefore normally only eight ranks deep, it could get very long: the risk of its being outflanked and attacked from the rear was greater than the risk of the enemy breaking through. To enable fighters to remain in lockstep despite the great length of the battle formation, it was divided into discrete units close to each other. In 490 near Marathón, some 9,000 Athenians and 1,000 Plataians[45] formed a battle line a good 1,600 m long against the Persians. Because of their numeric inferiority, the depth of the middle part of this phalanx was

[40]This is also argued, already for the pre-Persian ('archaic') period, by Oswyn Murray (1993: 92–101, 233–4).

[41]On this cf. Osborne (1996: 174–6).

[42]Cf. Lazenby (1993: 79, 256).

[43]Homer, *Iliad* 2.529, 2.830; Plutarch, *Alexander* 32.

[44]Sallares (1991: 311–12, 398–9); cf. Homer, *Odyssey* 4.605–9. The Homeric poems still talk about bronze armour, not iron, but this is explained as a deliberate archaism (cf. Tandy 1997: 10–11).

[45]On the reliability of those figures, see Lazenby (1993: 54).

reduced, to perhaps only four ranks. Indeed the Persians broke through here, but were defeated anyway. According to Heródotos, whose information may conceivably be exact, the Athenians lost only 192 men, against some 6,400 on the Persian side. This may have been because the Persian armour was much lighter, the Persian troops fighting without helmets, harnesses, or greaves, and with light osier shields. However, an army whose battle formation collapsed would generally suffer high losses in the period.[46]

The effectiveness of the hoplite phalanx as a whole as well as the survival of the individual fighters that made it up was based on voluntary, unenforceable cooperation and discipline, among warriors who were all equally important to ensure success. This put pressure on the position of the old elite. To maintain their military edge—by equipping themselves with a hoplite phalanx—magnates had to enlist growing numbers of socially inferior fighters, but since they depended on each of them individually, they could not refuse any of them a voice in matters that were important to them. This must have helped the transformation of the *pólis* into the community of equals as which Aristotle insistently describes it. Occasionally, the crisis of the old elite, the tendency to level the old hierarchy, led to the establishment of a 'tyranny' (*tyrannís*), when, instead of enfranchizing all warrior-citizens, they were instead all disenfranchized. But for obvious reasons—lack of loyalty and of willingness for sacrifice, which had to be compensated, for example, by employing mercenaries—this alternative model did not compete well in the long run.

A third factor contributing to the consolidation of the *pólis* may have been what is now called the 'great colonization' from the mid-eighth to the sixth century, when a large number of emigrants from areas already Greek sought new land in Asia Minor, around the Black Sea, in Sicily, in southern Italy, and elsewhere. The founding of new settlements was evidently a collaborative effort best accomplished by organizing the colonists into a cooperative. The structures that emerged as a result in turn probably reinforced similar tendencies towards cooperative organization in the colonists' areas of origin, with which they stayed in close contact. And the option of going abroad no doubt further weakened what traces of old-type rule may have remained.

2.2.1.2 *Rule and society in the* pólis*-world*

Political structures in the Graeco-Roman world were characterized by a low degree of mutual dependence of the people participating in them. Thus, *pólis* citizens, as farmers or at any rate owners of land, remained able to feed and clothe themselves; only exceptionally, as in Athens at the height of its power, do we find landless citizens. If so many citizens owned land, it was in part because few owned very much of it. The annual revenue of 500 *médimnoi* (26,250 l) of grain that, in Athens, made one a member of the highest class of citizens probably required only 30 hectares of arable, equivalent to a square of 300 by 1,000 m.[47] Most landowners in Attiké probably had around 5 hectares, and a small household could be fed from half that or less if necessary.[48] How strongly the majority of citizens remained rooted in the countryside even in Athens is illustrated by Thukydídês—who wrote as an eyewitness—in the context of the evacuation of the entire citizenry to the protection of the city walls at the outbreak of the war against the Peloponnesians in 431:

[46] Heródotos 6.117; Lazenby (1993: 64, 68, 74–5); on Persian armour ibid. pp. 24ff.
[47] Welwei (1998: 42).
[48] Burford (1993: 67–8).

The Athenians listened to him [Periklês] and were persuaded. They began to bring in from the fields the women and children as well as anything else with which they had equipped their houses [*sic*], even taking down the wooden fittings, while sheep and draught animals were sent to Eúboia and the adjacent islands. This removal was not easy for them to accept, since most of them had always been accustomed to life in the fields [*diá to aieí eiôthénai tous polloús en tois agroís diaitásthai*].[49]

The *polítai* constituted only a small part of the population of a *pólis*—probably rarely more than one quarter of the total population, and often less.[50] In Athens, whose population (including that of the *chôra*, i.e. the rural territory) in the mid-fifth century must have been somewhere between 200,000 and 300,000,[51] and in the mid-fourth century between 100,000 and 200,000,[52] the ratio of citizens and (male) non-citizens is estimated to have fluctuated between 1:6 and 1:2.5.[53] The non-citizens were partly slaves and partly metics. The latter (*mét-oikoi* = 'co-dwellers', which is what they were called in Athens) consisted of resident foreigners, freed slaves, and the descendants of either group.[54]

Metics could not possess real estate—not even the houses in which they lived—and paid a poll tax, the *metoíkion*. Not very onerous, its significance was mainly symbolical. Taxation of citizens was held to be acceptable only in emergencies, especially in wartime, whereas regular taxation was considered incompatible with their freedom. The *metoíkion* 'was thus the degrading mark of the outsider'.[55] To be able to settle in a *pólis*, metics had to find sponsors among the citizens who would have them registered. Metics worked as craftsmen, traders, tenant farmers, but also as physicians, artists, teachers, or 'logographs' (speech writers, especially for use in court). Aristotle (384–22), born at Stágeira in Macedon, was a metic in Athens. His extant will contains a provision disposing of 'my father's house' at Stágeira, indicating that the family had citizenship there. In current literature, the metics are often seen as wealthy, which may be due more to conventional notions of well-to-do merchants and business people than to critical examination of the available sources. Being landless, metics will normally have been less rich than the better-off *polítai*. Metics were also employed as fighters, which at that time was seen as a privilege rather than a duty, and like the citizens had to pay special taxes in wartime. There were special courts for them. They could not become *polítai*.

In the Greek world, honourable men owned land somewhere and were citizens of that place. As long as they remained honourable and—practically the same thing—farmers or at any rate landowners, they would hardly move elsewhere. Conversely, people who did move—and who would normally be craftsmen or even traders—could not be expected to be honourable. They might be useful, but it had to remain clear who was in charge of the *pólis*. Non-citizens would be granted the right of abode, but nothing

[49]Thukydídês 2.14.
[50]Bayer (1987: 35).
[51]Kloft (1992: 115, after V. Ehrenberg).
[52]Sealey (1993: 19–22).
[53]Finley (1999: 48).
[54]What is known about the metics, and what is said about them in what follows, applies to Athens in the 5th and 4th cent. Aristotle (*Politiká* 1275*b* 35) seems to imply that metics existed in Athens already in the time of Kleisthénês in the late 6th cent., and elsewhere (1275*a* 8, 1326*a* 20) clearly takes for granted that the phenomenon was found everywhere in the *pólis*-world. However, we know little about metics in other Greek cities.
[55]Finley (1999: 164).

more. Above all it was necessary to prevent them from acquiring land, a finite quantity and already distributed among the *polítai*. If they admitted the right of outsiders to purchase real estate, then in an economy based, in fact and normatively, very largely on agriculture it could only be disadvantageous for them. Significantly, in exceptional cases someone might have citizenship but no land of his own. The converse, however, is not found: someone possessing real estate without having citizenship (or at least a special dispensation).[56] Landownership (or at any rate, the right to landownership) and citizenship were inseparable: when the Romans in 146 BCE confiscated the land of its citizens, that was the end of Corinth as a *pólis*.

The distribution of wealth essentially based on land, a fixed resource, was a zero-sum game to which outsiders could only be admitted at the peril of the existing players, who risked being sidelined. The prohibition even to own dwellings shows how acute this concern was. The same motive was behind regulations about the disposal of real estate, which could not be sold or left to non-citizens. Even so the *polítai* were diffident of economic success on the part of the metics. The contempt for non-agricultural economic activities was also a mechanism of social control: metics must not be encouraged to be economically successful lest their wealth put pressure on the established position, economic, but also social and political, of the landowning citizens.

Aristotle remarks that 'even most craftsmen are wealthy',[57] the reference here being not to metics but to citizens. What he means in context is: wealthy enough to be eligible for public office even in oligarchies, where this required a certain minimum wealth. As Aristotle saw it, craftsmen ought properly to be excluded from the decision-making of the *pólis*. He mentions a law formerly in force at Thebes, according to which no one could hold public office who had not kept away from the *agorá*—the main town square, where market would be held—for at least ten years. But this 'wealth' of craftsmen may have been quite relative: presumably it seemed worthy of note not because it threatened to equal that of the better-off landowners, but because it was not smaller to the extent that those landowners (or Aristotle) would have wished. Given the close correlation of wealth and social and political influence at that time, the law in question could not have been passed if those that it put at a disadvantage had not been rather less wealthy than those who benefited. If such discrimination of the kind of economic activity that went on in the *agorá* was the lot even of citizens, the economic success of metics was clearly welcomed even less.

The granting of citizenship to outsiders was an exceptional honour. Women could not be *polítai*, but passed on the entitlement to citizenship to their sons. In Athens, a law of 451 reserved citizenship for those whose parents had both been members of the citizen class, that is, who had two citizen grandfathers. Aristotle mentions that elsewhere three or more male citizen ancestors might be required.[58] If a citizen married a woman from outside the citizen class of his *pólis*, their children lost the citizenship. Unless there were special inter-*pólis* agreements, it did not matter in this case if the woman was a member of the citizen class of a different *pólis*. Similarly, metics could not obtain citizenship for their offspring by marrying someone from the citizen class of their *pólis*. For extra safety such intermarriage was formally prohibited in fourth-century Athens, where the large

[56] Finley (1999: 48).
[57] *ploutoúsi gar kai hoi polloí tôn technitôn*; Aristotle, *Politiká* 1278*a* 24.
[58] Aristotle, *Politiká* 1275*b* 24.

number of citizens and the difficulty to keep track of them meant that false claims to citizen status were a problem. Evidently, the point of such restrictions was to prevent the acquisition of the right to landownership by outsiders if not for themselves, then for their children.

As a result, a large part of the population of any *pólis*, especially of a big and wealthy one like Athens, politically had no share in it. Conversely, there was little to link metics to a given *pólis*. The demographic fluctuation must have been considerable. 'Many towns [*ástea*] that were once large have now become small,' writes Heródotos in the fifth century BCE, 'and those that were large in my time were small formerly.'[59] He is echoed by Plátôn in the fourth century: 'Have not smaller *póleis* become large, and inversely larger *póleis* small?'[60] The Athenian Isokrátês, in a speech of 355 BCE, criticizes the rashness with which his fellow citizens waged war, and predicts that as the result of a less ruinous policy, 'we shall see our *pólis* . . . thronged with merchants and foreigners and metics, by whom it is now deserted.'[61] The mobility of the metics also played a role in the Hellenization of the eastern Mediterranean basin following the conquests of Alexander of Macedon. Alexander, as well as those who later divided up his legacy between them, obtained settlers for the new *póleis* that they founded, especially in Asia, from the ranks of the metics.[62] This may have contributed to the depopulation of Greece proper, lamented in the second century BCE by Polýbios.[63]

As a consequence of the peculiarities discussed—a consequence even less appreciated in the literature on the period than those peculiarities themselves—coercive rule was difficult to establish in the Greek world. The notion, so important in more recent western history, of rule over territory was unknown. Inasmuch as this means rule over people, it is mediated territorially: people are considered subject to someone's rule because of their presence in a certain territory. But such rule really is rule over territory as such, implying power over anything found there, be it people or things. 'For the state, with regard to its members, is master of all their belongings by virtue of the social contract,' Jean-Jacques Rousseau wrote in 1762, formulating a fundamental concept of present-day political organization.[64] Had he tried to make this point to an audience of Greek *polítai*, one may be sure that he would have been met with disbelief. The first difficulty would have been to make a Greek audience of the period understand what a 'state' is. If this hurdle had been overcome, the audience would have been shocked at the perverse idea, as it would have appeared to them, that the association of free landowners should create a 'master' over them and restrict their right of property. This was practically sacred. In fifth-century Athens, citizens could be exiled for ten years by means of the famous ostrakism (*ostrakismós*); their property remained untouched.[65]

[59]Heródotos 1.5 (1920–5: i 9; modified).
[60]Plátôn, *Nómoi* 676*c*.
[61]Isokrátês, *On the Peace* 21 (1928–45: ii 21; modified).
[62]Bringmann (1965: 26).
[63]Polýbios 36.17.
[64]Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Du contrat social* 1.9.
[65]Alison Burford, in her valuable study on *Land and labor in the Greek world*, claims that the *pólis* was 'proprietor in chief' of the property of its citizens and could dispose of it over their heads. But the insistence with which she repeatedly posits this is not backed up by any very powerful evidence. Burford does not cite the political thinking of the period, although if she were right and this really was an accepted principle at the time, one would expect to find something on the subject for example in Plátôn or Aristotle. In support of her thesis, Burford (1993: esp. 16ff.) only adduces circumstantial

There was no territorial rule in the *pólis*-world.[66] Territorially, the *pólis* was the sum of the estates of its citizens, plus the estates of the gods—that is, the endowments of their sanctuaries—and land held in common by the citizens. But it was really the citizens that made up the *pólis*, not the territory, whose existence was as it were a side effect of the fact that the *pólis* was created from an association of landowners. Moreover, we should not overlook that on account of low population density and the rugged, heterogeneous nature of the terrain, where fertile soil was intermingled with areas that were too steep, too wet, or simply insufficiently fertile to be cultivated, much territory probably remained unclaimed. I suspect that in such conditions thinking in terms of large continuous areas did not come naturally. The fact that, unlike today's state, the *pólis* as a corporation did not have authority over territory as such and therefore could not expand its authority in space is one of a number of structural factors, hardly ever recognized in the literature, that explain why the *pólis* was almost incapable of territorial expansion and why the *pólis*-world of the eighth to sixth centuries was so stable structurally.

It has often been noted—and in light of more recent experience of 'international' politics been marvelled at—that the *pólis* was 'territorially unelastic' (in the apt expression of Peter Manicas),[67] and that no attempts were ever made to 'unite' the Greeks. In this context the point is sometimes made that the *pólis* could only function as a small community. Aristotle argues that if the citizens did not know each other personally, it would be too easy for foreigners and metics to pass themselves off as citizens, and that therefore the *pólis* should be 'easy to take in at a glance [*eusýnoptos*]'.[68] In fact, as is often the case with his discussion of '*pólis* matters', Aristotle rationalizes rather than explains an existing situation. The example of Athens with its five-digit citizen body and six-digit population shows that the kind of fraud to which Aristotle alludes clearly did not seriously imperil the functioning of the *pólis*.

In reality, the *pólis* remained small because, unlike the Romans, its citizens were adamantly opposed to opening their ranks to newcomers. Had the *pólis* expanded territorially, the twin monopoly of the *polítai* on decision-making power and landownership could not have been preserved undiluted. How could newly won territory have been distributed among the citizens? In proportion to their share of the total of the existing property? That would have been a cumbersome procedure fraught with obvious difficulties, like the need to take account of variations in the quality of the land. Small landowners would have had little use for new land far away from their existing plots; but the alternative of redistributing the entire territory of the *pólis* every time it was enlarged cannot have appeared very inviting, either.

This left the option of admitting new citizens, which, however, would not have been possible without endangering the position of the existing citizens. The new citizens might have been given new land without taking any land away from the existing citizens, and they might have been given so little as to keep them too poor for public office. But this would have worked only in the first generation, since it would have been impractical to try to prevent new citizens from acquiring, by purchase, marriage, or inheritance,

evidence, which to me seems not so much to prove her point as to be merely compatible with it. This would appear to be another case of an apparent 'gap' in the evidence being filled by projecting today's way of thinking back into the past.

[66] Cf. Calabi (1953: 1–10).

[67] Manicas (1982: 678).

[68] Aristotle, *Politiká* 1326*b* 25.

land originally belonging to old citizens and from thereby enhancing their social and political position at the expense of the latter. This, by the way, must have been not just a powerful reason for the territorial inelasticity of the *pólis*, but also for its proliferation and geographical spread: if someone wanted new land, very good, but let them find it at a safe distance and without calling in question the existing distribution of wealth and influence in their native *pólis*. In the course of the 'great colonization', it was not uncommon for the founders of a new *pólis* to admit additional immigrants at a later date—albeit, tellingly, often on less advantageous conditions. Obviously, a balance had to be struck here between wishing to preserve the position of the original settlers and their descendants and the desire not to leave the new *pólis* too small and weak.

During the war against the Lakedaimonians that started in 431, the Athenians relaxed the law requiring that a citizen be descended from the citizen class not just on the father's but also on the mother's side. The intention was to make up for the dramatic loss of citizens, probably not so much because of the war as such but because so many citizens, crowded together behind the city walls, fell victim to an epidemic that soon broke out among them. When the war was over, the old law was quickly restored. Aristotle speaks of this kind of measure in general terms as an expedient in case of a shortage of citizens.[69] In Lakedaímôn, plots of land for 9,000 full citizens are said to have been allotted originally;[70] for the year 480, the number of full citizens is given as 'about 8,000'.[71] But Aristotle, speaking of the situation in his own time (the third quarter of the fourth century), says that less than 1,000 were left.[72] It is true that after their disastrous defeat by the Thebans, in 371, the Lakedaimonians had lost Messḗnê and thus a considerable portion of their territory. Many of those who had possessions there must have found themselves left with less than the minimum wealth required of full citizens, and thereby reduced to the status of *hypomeíones*, excluded from political participation though not from landownership. The existence of second-class citizens means that the dramatic fall of the number of full citizens indicated by Aristotle did not necessarily, as such, translate into a proportional concentration of landed wealth in the hands of ever fewer owners.

Nevertheless, elsewhere Aristotle does describe growing concentration of landownership as a problem particularly of the Lakedaimonians.[73] The original plots could be merged by marriage or inheritance, but also divided among heirs—an incentive for those, probably the majority, who owned less land, to keep the number of their children low lest they lose the status of full citizens. Plots could be held by women in their own right—a manifestation of their famously strong position in the society of this *pólis*, but which also aggravated the situation of those teetering on the brink of becoming *hypomeíones*. One might expect the catastrophe of 371 to have motivated those who remained unaffected to show solidarity with the dispossessed. But what could they have done? Redistributing the land remaining in the hands of full citizens among all those who were full citizens before 371 would not only have been complicated, but might have brought the full citizens as a class too close to the lesser citizens for comfort; lowering the minimum wealth that landowners needed to qualify as full citizens would have had the same effect. The fact that the attempts at reform undertaken in the late phase of this *pólis* (second half of the

[69]Carlier (1990: 37); Aristotle *Politiká* 1278*a* 30.
[70]Plutarch, *Lykúrgos* 8.
[71]Heródotos 7.234, 9.28.
[72]Aristotle, *Politiká* 1270*a* 30.
[73]Aristotle, *Politiká* 1307*a* 36.

third century) and accompanied by popular unrest always centred on projects of land reform once again indicates where the main stumbling block presumably lay.[74]

Remarks by Thukydídês on the *pólis* Leontínoi (now Lentini) in Sicily are also instructive. The Leontines

> enrolled [*epegrápsanto*] many new citizens and the *dêmos* [the 'people', the 'mass' of the less well-off citizens] were minded to make a redistribution of the land. But the powerful [*dynatoí*: i.e. the great landowners], perceiving their intention, brought over the Syracusans [Syracuse is about 50 kilometres (30 miles) distant] and expelled the *dêmos* . . . the powerful, coming to an agreement with the Syracusans and leaving their own city desolated, settled in Syracuse on condition of obtaining its citizenship.

It is telling that the assurance that the rich Leontines would have the citizenship of Syracuse is mentioned explicitly, as the only detail of the agreement. No doubt, new citizens were not something that the Syracusans would normally welcome. If they received the Leontines, it was because on the one hand they brought their land with them, obviating any need to share with them, and because on the other hand it meant getting rid of a troublesome neighbour. In fact, it seems that even so the immigrants did not feel very welcome in Syracuse, since, dissatisfied with their situation there, some of them subsequently allied themselves with the expellees and returned to Leontínoi.

But why did the *dêmos* of Leontínoi accept new citizens? The background to this episode, which took place in the 420s, is the conflict, virulent at that time throughout much of the Greek world, between oligarchs and 'democrats' (meaning those who wished the *dêmos*, the majority of the poorer citizens, to have the last word in the affairs of the *pólis*—quotation marks because, as will be discussed later on, the Greek *dêmokratía* had nothing to do with what is now called 'democracy'). In the case of Leontínoi, this was overlaid by the conflict between Athens (allied with Leontínoi) and Syracuse (hostile to its neighbour Leontínoi); since like Athens Syracuse was 'democratic', otherwise the rich Leontines could not have hoped to find support there. The *dêmos*, on the other hand, clearly hoped to strengthen its position by giving some of the land of the rich (or perhaps land held in common) to new citizens in sympathy with its goals. From the point of view of the role of territory for politics, the episode is interesting because it illustrates how in Leontínoi the struggle for influence within the citizenry was inseparable from the question of the distribution of land. It is also worthy of note that the richer citizens were prepared to abandon their home and move elsewhere to secure their land. Moreover, this illustrates the mobility of the population as compared to cultures based on irrigation schemes.[75]

Owing to the specific organization of the *pólis*, rule over people was no easier in the *pólis*-world than rule over territory. The *polítai* did not rule over themselves. Aristotle in the *Politiká* insists time and again that the citizenry of a *pólis* was meant to be a fellowship of equals who took turns to rule (*árchein*) and be ruled (*árchesthai*).[76] In this chapter, I always translate the verb *archô* by the English verb 'to rule', since it corresponds to the noun *archê* 'rule'. Frequently it is employed, for example by Aristotle,

[74] Cf. Forrest (1969: 131–7, 144–50). According to Forrest, the decline of the number of full citizens was a more or less continuous process that had started well before 371.

[75] Thukydídês 5.4 (1928–35: iii 7; modified).

[76] Aristotle, e.g. *Politiká* 1259*b* 5, 1261*b* 4, 1279*a* 10, 1287*a* 17.

in a sense closer to the verb 'to govern'. But it seems significant to me that this latter verb has no equivalent in Attic Greek: the concept of 'government' was not familiar to a society in which people very largely looked after their own affairs. As a result, there was no word for 'government'. *Archế* never means 'government', but for want of another term the verb used by Aristotle for designating the exercise of public authority in the *pólis*, *árchô*, is derived from it.

To be sure, there is other terminology that has some affinity with the present-day concept of government, such as the verbs *dioikố* and *politeúomai*. Both however, best translated perhaps as 'to administer', have more to do with the way the citizen body was organized, referring, in a static sense, to the 'political system', rather than to the ongoing process of decision-making or the personnel involved in it. In today's Greek, the equivalent of 'to govern' is *kybernố*, the original meaning of which is 'to steer', more particularly a ship. By its etymology (which is obscure) and meaning, it is identical with the Latin verb *guberno*, from which the word 'government' and its analogues in many other languages are derived. In today's Greek, 'government' is *kybérnêsê* (in 'classical' morphology, *kybérnêsis*). In the pre-christian period, *kybernố* (as well as *kybérnêsis*) and *guberno* are used metaphorically to express rule (as is Greek *euthýnô* 'to lead or direct'), but not as a technical term of political discourse. The same is true of Latin *rego*, 'to lead or direct' (whence German *regieren* 'to govern', and *Regierung* 'government') and the corresponding noun *regimen*.

Referring to the common Greek distinction between reason (good) and passion (bad), Aristotle posits that the law should rule (or govern), not men, because the law embodies reason. 'Anyone who wants men to rule adds a wild animal [*thêríon*]. For that is what appetite [*epithymía*] is, and desire [*thýmos*; the stem here being the same as in *epithymía*] warps the rule even of the best men.'[77] For Aristotle, the point of the *pólis* was precisely to protect, as far as possible, the *polítai* from such rule 'by men'. Aristotle restricts the term *polítai* 'citizens' to those with full access to the decision-making of the *pólis*, somewhat arbitrarily excluding those who, although they actually *had* citizenship, in an oligarchic *pólis* were insufficiently wealthy to hold office.[78] In the *pólis*-world of the pre-Persian era, oligarchy was ubiquitous. But even in an oligarchy, the rich citizens were in no position to rule over anyone (except their families and slaves). Less privileged citizens could, at the very least, be treated no worse than metics. The metics for their part had to observe the regulations which the citizens on whose territory the lived laid down for them, but if their situation became too disagreeable they would move away, thereby weakening the *pólis* economically and militarily. Their exclusion from owning immovable property made this decision easier for them, and to keep them against their will would have been difficult and of no obvious advantage to the *polítai*. But if, thus, metics could hardly be forced to do something they did not want to do, it was even less possible in the case of citizens.

The decision-makers of the *pólis* did not have the support of troops or a police force. The concept of a monopoly on legitimate violence of the 'government' was unknown in Greek as well as Roman society during the entire period considered in this chapter.[79] Nowadays, it is generally (if mostly implicitly) assumed that society will not function

[77] Aristotle, *Politiká* 1287*a* 29.
[78] Aristotle, *Politiká* 1275*b* 19.
[79] Cf. Finley (1991: 18–22); Krause (2004: 13, 44–52); Nippel (1995).

without rule. Greek and Roman thinking on the matter was different, and on the contrary tended strongly to reject rule at least over free men. It is striking that at the same time it took for granted the institution of slavery. This must have something to do with the fact that a master could control his slaves in a way that in the conditions of the Mediterranean world of the period no ruler or other authority could hope to control subjects. Similarly, today's civilization accepts rule because it is accustomed to it, which in turn is because rule in today's conditions of tight interindividual interdependence is easy—certainly by comparison with the ancient Mediterranean world.

To a certain extent, 'forces of order' existed, such as, in Athens, public slaves. But information about them is scarce, and there is no further mention of them after about 390 BCE. In Rome, there were the lictors (recruited from lower-class citizens), who accompanied the elected office-holders. Army officers could be entrusted with police-like tasks, like the centurio in Luke's *Acts of the Apostles* who escorts Paul from Palestine to Rome (where he is to stand trial) in the 60s of the first century. Such forces were not numerous, and their functions were limited. Troops could not be used for police tasks in a free *pólis*, where the army consisted mainly of the citizens themselves. Called up only in wartime, they were not available on a permanent basis. Mercenaries were relatively few in the *pólis*-world (certainly in the pre-Persian period), and if they were commissioned by the citizens could not well be used against them, either. In the *pólis*, therefore, there normally was no coercive rule over free men (free in the sense that they were no slaves). Where coercive rule did exist—in what political discourse of the period called *tyrannís*, tyranny—it was considered abnormal and illegitimate. Tyranny seldom lasted long; even where it succeeded in surviving for more than a generation it had 'insular character' in the Greek world as a whole.[80]

But if within the *pólis* rule could not be based on coercive power (at least not legitimately), then how could it be done outside the *pólis*? Coercive power was what a master had over his slaves. Significantly, the control that the Lakedaimonians exercised over the southern Peloponnese, which for a *pólis* was an extraordinarily large territory, meant common ownership of much of the population that lived there, the heilots (*heílôtes* or *heílôtai*), who were treated as slaves. Equally significantly, the attempts, to be discussed further on, of individual *póleis* to establish rule over other *póleis* tended likewise to treat those subject to this rule pretty much like slaves, a major reason why such attempts were short-lived. Keeping down the heilots succeeded for a much longer period, but saddled the Lakedaimonians with their notorious militarized constitution, the subject of much debate and sharp criticism in the *pólis*-world. It was more in keeping with the social conditions and general ethos of the period to reject rule altogether: not just rule over fellow citizens, within the *pólis*, but also rule by the *pólis* over non-citizens. Aristotle thought that admitting the latter would open the door to the former.

> It is no reason to consider a *pólis* happy [or 'successful', *eudaímôn*] and to praise its lawgiver because it [equally possible: he] has sought [to exercise power] so as to rule over the neighbours [*hóti (krateín)* ḗskesen epí to tôn pélas árchein]. Such a course will do great damage: for clearly, then, those citizens able to do so should seek the means to rule [*árchein*] over their own *pólis*.[81]

[80] Welwei (2002: 100). Cf. the statistic on the duration of tyranny in diverse places in Aristotle, *Politiká* 1315*b* 12.

[81] Aristotle, *Politiká* 1333*b* 29. The word *krateín*, 'to exercise power', is a conjecture, highly plausible from the context, to fill an apparent gap in the manuscripts. Cf. Isokrátês, *On the Peace* 115.

To understand the politics of the *pólis*-world, it is important to keep the preceding discussion in mind. In the *pólis*-world, legitimate rule had to make do without coercion; conversely, rule supported by coercion lost its legitimacy. In either case, it was fragile.

2.2.1.3 *The* pólis*-world as a cultural community*

The free population of the *pólis*-world was divided into the *polítai* with their families, and the more mobile majority of the non-citizens, whose association with a given *pólis* remained conditional. In this society, we find on the one hand extreme political fragmentation, the average *pólis* being small, but on the other a strong consciousness that the Greek world formed a single great community, quite homogeneous in terms of culture and social organization and clearly set apart from the non-Greek rest of the world. Already in Hesiod, about 700 BCE, we find the expression *Panéllênes*, meaning 'all Greeks, the Greek world',[82] but sources documenting the consciousness of belonging to a cultural community become more abundant following the appearance of the Persians in about 500 BCE. One reason for this is simply that from that time onwards far more sources are extant than from the earlier period. In addition, however, the crisis of the *pólis*-world, which the Persians caused, increased the urgency of appeals to pan-Greek community feeling, at first because of the common threat that the Persians represented, then because of the turmoil within the Greek world that the Persians had indirectly set off.

By no means all Greeks were ready to resist the expansion of the Persian empire. Indeed the influential oracle of Delphoí notoriously discouraged resistance. Yet Heródotos (∼490–∼420) lauds those Greeks who formed a coalition against the Persian threat as having 'the better purpose for Greece'.[83] Elsewhere, when he has the Athenians assure the Lakedaimonians that they would never secede from the anti-Persian alliance, Heródotos has them invoke 'the kinship of all Greeks in blood and speech, and the shrines of gods and the sacrifices that we have in common, and the likeness of our way of life, to all which it would ill beseem Athenians to be false'.[84]

Thukydídês in the fifth century BCE draws attention to the cultural community by using the word 'Greece', a geographical term, to designate a political actor. Nowadays, we are very much accustomed to this ('*Beijing* complains of interference', '*France* criticizes the United States'). The political discourse of the Graeco-Roman world instead employs what today's historians call 'ethnics' (from the Greek *ethniká*): not 'Athens' does something (political) but 'the Athenians'. This is often emphasized in the relevant literature. But although ethnics are the rule, exceptions exist, as David Whitehead has shown.[85] The reason they have not been highlighted before or more often may well be that being in accordance with today's speech habits they fail to register when we read texts from the period.

The examples adduced by Whitehead from Greek sources are names of *póleis* and islands, which at least may have corresponded to a population capable of collective action. Whitehead could have pointed out the even more remarkable fact that Thukydídês, whom he cites repeatedly, more than once treats *Hellás* 'Greece' itself as an actor, for example 'Having, with difficulty and after a long time, reliably regained its tranquillity

[82] Hesiod, *Works and Days* 527. For the missing 'h' cf. the remarks on Greek transliteration.
[83] *hoi Héllênes hoi perí tên Helláda ta ameínô phronéontes*. Heródotos 7.145 (1920–5: iii 453; modified).
[84] Heródotos 8.144 (1920–5: iv 153).
[85] Whitehead (1986).

and not being subject to expulsions any more, Hellás sent out colonies.'[86] This usage must have struck contemporaries as more contrived than today's readers, who are familiar with it (Thukydídês, too, ordinarily employs ethnics, *hoi Héllênes* not *hê Hellás*). But even from today's perspective, it is striking that Thukydídês makes 'Greece' the author of the Greek colonization movement, as if it had been a centrally directed enterprise rather than consisting of uncoordinated, spontaneous initiatives of the inhabitants of the various *póleis*. On the other hand, the colonization movement was indeed a pan-Greek phenomenon, resulting from emulation within a cultural community whose members were aware of what went on elsewhere in it. Colonies were often founded by settlers from several *póleis*. In that sense, the expression is fitting because it makes visible both the cultural community as such and its effect on the behaviour of individual actors within it.[87] In fact, this kind of usage is not original with Thukydídês but already found somewhat earlier in Heródotos: Pheidippídês of Athens tells the Lakedaimonians that after the Persian conquest of Erétria 'Greece is the weaker by the loss of a notable *pólis*.'[88]

Also remarkable is a passage in the speech that the Athenian orator Isokrátês (436–338) wrote for the king (as he was to become later) of the Lakedaimonians Archídamos III, or which at any rate he puts in Archídamos' mouth. The context is how the Lakedaimonians might overcome the dramatic crisis that had befallen their *pólis* in the mid-360s. In a famous coinage, Benedict Anderson has defined today's 'nation' as an 'imagined community', by far the greater part of whose members have never even seen each other. Nevertheless they perceive themselves as belonging to this community and indeed as obligated to it.[89] Isokrátês, too, has Archídamos invoke an 'imagined community' that operates as the collective super-ego of the Lakedaimonians and in whose name they may be called upon to give their utmost. Isokrátês depicts this community as theatre-goers (not necessarily to see a play, as a *pólis* would often use its theatre for meetings of the citizens). But the 'nation' that he has sitting in the audience is not 'Lakedaímôn' as we might expect from our own political socialization, and from hearing Lakedaímôn referred to as a 'city-*state*'. It is 'the Greeks':

> Nor must you forget that the attention of the whole world is fixed upon this assembly and on the decisions that we shall reach here. Let each of you, therefore, govern his thoughts as one who is giving an account of his own character in a public theatre, as it were, before the assembled Greeks.[90]

It is worthwhile to explore, with the help of this image, the different ways in which political community was constructed in the *pólis*-world and in today's world. To represent 'the Lakedaimonians' as a theatre *audience* would in fact have been impossible for Isokrátês, whereas today's concept of the 'nation' allows it. The *pólis* Lakedaímôn and 'the Lakedaimonians' were one and the same. Both terms primarily designated those *polítai* entitled to take part in the communal decision-making: the citizens *were* the *pólis*. There was no one else to represent it, no 'government' (despite the sort of managing committee formed by the five ephors) or 'head of state' (despite the existence

[86] *Mólis te en pollôi chróno*$_i$ *hêsychásasa hê Hellás bebaíôs kai oukéti anistaménê apoikías exépempse*. Thukydídês 1.12.

[87] I thank Simon Hornblower for drawing my attention to this usage in Thukydídês.

[88] *póli logímôi hê Hellás gégone asthenestérê*. Heródotos 6.106 (1920–5: iii 159; modified).

[89] Anderson (1991).

[90] Isokrátês, *Archídamos* 106 (1928–45: i 409; modified).

in Lakedaímôn of not one king but two). But the (full) *polítai* could only be either absent or participants; they could not be their own audience. Within Lakedaímôn, discounting foreigners and slaves the only conceivable audience would be the less privileged citizens.

However, the notion that full citizens should be accountable to those inferior in rank would have appeared grotesque to contemporaries. That left only the cultural community, the *pólis*-world as a whole, as an acceptable 'court of opinion', and within that group specifically the *polítai* in the rest of the Greek world. Their respect was the more important precisely because the full citizens, in Lakedaímôn as elsewhere, were so much less numerous than any other group. With the citizens a minority everywhere, their position rested very largely on norms held in common throughout the Greek world. It could not have been maintained had they fought each other in ways that would have called those norms in question. This explains why the cultural community overarching the individual *póleis* was more important to them than it is to a nation of our own time. The resulting solidarity manifested itself for example in the limitation of the means permissible in warfare, as we shall see in a moment. Today's nation is considered culturally self-sufficient; the *pólis* was no such thing, nor, for all the insistence on its *autárkeia* for example in Aristotle, did it claim to be.

The converse of the self-perception of the Greek world as a homogeneous cultural community, and of the solidarity that went with it, was the disdainful (by today's norms, unabashedly racist) rejection of the *bárbaroi*, those pitiable fellows who, lacking a knowledge of Greek, would only ever say *bar bar* ('bla bla'). Aristotle took for granted that 'barbarians' were born to be slaves and Greeks were born to rule.[91] According to Isokrátês, stories about the Trojan and the Persian wars were popular because they told of victories of Greeks over barbarians—'so ingrained in our nature is our hostility to [the barbarians].' More generally

> you will find that our warfare against the barbarians has inspired our hymns [*hýmnoi*, songs of praise], while that against the Greeks has brought forth our dirges [*thrênoi*]; and that the former are sung at our festivals, while we recall the latter on occasions of sorrow.

Note that Isokrátês' 'we' means all Greeks, and note also once more the allusion to common customs—as in the answer of the Athenians to the Lakedaimonians cited earlier—and a common cultural heritage.[92]

Isókratês' speech, which dates from the 380s, is in fact an appeal to end the self-laceration of the *pólis*-world, which in the decades following the wars against the Persians had reached an unprecedented intensity. Isokrátês nostalgically recalls the time when the Greeks made common cause against the Persians: 'while they regarded their home *póleis* as their several places of abode, yet they considered Greece to be their common fatherland.'[93] He calls on the Greeks to settle their differences and join together to conquer the empire of the Persians. In doing so, he admits to being less than original, conceding that both the complaint about internecine wars among Greeks and the idea

[91] Aristotle, e.g. *Politiká* 1252*b* 8, 1285*a* 20, 1327*b* 29. The latter passage explicitly compares the Greeks with other peoples (*éthnê*) of the inhabited world (*oikouménê*) and explains why the Greeks are superior to all of them.

[92] Isokrátês; *Panêgyrikós* 158 (1928–45: i 221; modified).

[93] *idía men ástê tas hautôn póleis hêgoúmenoi, koinên de patrída tên Helláda nomízontes eínai.* Isokrátês, *Panêgyrikós* 81 (1928–45: i 169; modified).

of instead leading them jointly against the Persians were commonplace.[94] Indeed similar utterances are found in other authors, such as Plátôn (427–347), who observes that when Greeks fight Greeks it should not be called war (*pólemos*) but civil strife (*stásis*), and that 'in this case Greece [*hê Hellás*] is ill': Plátôn, too, turns the name of the country into an anthropomorphic grammatical subject.[95]

2.2.1.4 *War in the pre-Persian Greek world to about 500 BCE*

Another expression of cultural community, warfare in the pre-Persian *pólis*-world was the subject of a code of behaviour to the point of taking on the appearance of a ritual. Referring to the time about 500 BCE, Heródotos has an outsider, the Persian commander Mardónios (Marduniya), call the Greek manner of doing battle 'entirely unreasonable'. As Mardónios (in Heródotos) explains to the Persian Great King:

> When they have declared war against each other, they come down to the fairest and most level ground that they can find and there they fight, so that the victors come not off without great harm; and of the vanquished I say not so much as a word, for they are utterly destroyed. Yet speaking as they do the same language, they should end their disputes by the means of heralds and messengers, and by any way rather than fighting; or if needs must that they war against each other, they should discover each where his strongest defence lies, and there make his essay.[96]

Although they are put in the mouth of a Persian, the formulations are no doubt Heródotos' own, as is the perception (really a self-image) that they express. The polemical mode of this statement presupposes a Greek audience familiar with what Greek warfare was really like, and thus able to recognize the element of exaggeration in Mardónios' account. No doubt, casualties could be substantial when hoplites clashed, but the vanquished were far from annihilated. Otherwise the considerable Greek enthusiasm for war would no doubt have been far less.[97]

Herodotos' allusion to cultural community ('speaking as they do the same language') expresses his own pan-Hellenic agenda: for him this community should leave no place for war of Greek against Greek. Yet at the same time, the warfare that he describes was not a breakdown but an application of the common Greek culture. Without universal recognition of membership in the pan-Greek community and of the code of honour that it shared, the rules of war described by the Persian, 'unreasonable' in themselves, could have had no force. Indeed those rules were known as 'customs of the Greeks', *ta tôn Hellḗnôn nómima*.[98] Conversely, they did not apply to conflict with non-Greeks. 'Barbarians' could be treated differently: their land could be taken away for colonization and they themselves could be enslaved, which was not customary among Greeks.

The limitation of the means permissible in Greek warfare correlated with the social organization of the *pólis*. The troops of the *pólis* consisted first of all of the citizens themselves. Precisely because they were a minority of the inhabitants, they could not

[94] Isokrátês, *Panêgyrikós* 15.

[95] Plátôn, *Politeía* 470c.

[96] Heródotos 7.9 (1920–5: iii 315).

[97] 20th-cent. authors concur that the character of Greek warfare in the pre-Persian era was 'agonal' (i.e. similar to a competition in the cultic games or *agṓnes*) or 'akin to a duel', but not a 'fight to the death' (Maier 1987: 17; Meier 1990: 561–9, 575; de Romilly 1968: 215; Vernant 1968: 20–3).

[98] Vernant (1968: 22); cf. e.g. Thukydídês 3.59, 4.97.

entrust the defence of the *pólis* to someone else, lest he become a threat to them. To be sure, all free men could carry arms, and thus metics would fight for 'their' *pólis*, too. But, evidently, fighting could not be left to them, or the position of the citizens would have been undermined. As the main protagonists of war, citizens had an interest in promoting the kind of warfare that they could best handle and control. Hoplites formed the core of their troops because, in the right circumstances, they were pretty much invincible while at the same time they did not need much training—for which farmers, as the citizens mostly were, literally had little time. Concurrently, other means of warfare were frowned upon, delegitimized. Archers, and even more so mounted archers or other cavalry, would have needed training, for which there was no time, and horses, for which there was no land. They were decried on the grounds that it was cowardly to strike from a distance, while mounted warfare in general was cowardly because riders could make a quick getaway. Horses and skilled drivers would also have been needed for the chariots featured in the battle scenes of the *Iliad*, where of course they are an attribute of magnates. That is what they remained in the chariot races that continued to be an important part of the various pan-Hellenic cultic games like those at Olympía; but they disappeared from the battlefields of the *pólis*-world, however fair and level.[99]

The aim in war was to have the better of the opposition, not normally the annihilation or conquest of a rival community.[100] Nevertheless, conquest was not unknown. The major instance is the annexation of Messḗnê. The Lakedaimonians were originally limited to land around Spártê, to the east of the Taúgetos: some 115 km (70 miles) long and with a steep main ridge some 2,100 m high (2,407 m in its highest peak), this great mountain range divides the southern Peloponnese in a north–south direction. Messḗnê lies on the other, western side of the Taúgetos and geographically is thus an entirely separate, large region. The conquest of Messḗnê by the Lakedaimonians probably occurred in the late-eighth century (there is controversy over the date). Said to have taken twenty years and, one must assume, not exactly facilitated by the mountain barrier, it could only be made permanent in the seventh century following an even longer period of continual fighting.

Such a venture was not at all typical. By contrast, border quarrels appear to have been a frequent cause of war—in other words, conflict over territory, but territory that was marginal. It stands to reason that a situation in which all available land was neatly divided up and assigned to some *pólis* or other did not come about overnight. As pointed out, given the topography of Greece quite a lot of land was hard or impossible to cultivate and thus remained unclaimed. Stretches of such land often determined the boundaries between citizen bodies, which is why one would have expected the Taúgetos to keep Lakedaimonians and Messenians apart. But if the spheres of influence of two citizen bodies met in a fertile zone, such as a plain, it must have been tempting to accuse persons on the other side of usurping land that one would have liked to possess or indeed had possessed in the past. For example, the people of Árgos refused to accept the loss of the Kynuría, another region in the Peloponnese, to the Lakedaimonians. 'They always haggle about this land, because it is border country [*methoría*],' Thukydídês remarks on negotiations between Árgos and Lakedaímôn in 420 BCE, more than a century after the

[99] To be sure, in Athens from the 6th to the 4th cent. the second highest of the four classes of citizens was called *hippeís*, riders. However, this merely expressed the fact that they were rich enough to afford horses; in battle they fought on foot like everybody else.

[100] Meier (1990: 567); de Romilly (1968: 211).

Kynuría had changed hands.[101] One might also haggle over land that was not owned privately but collectively, serving for example as pasture, as seems often to have been the case in border areas.

But such quarrels were hardly existential, and war was therefore ordinarily fought with limited means. *póleis* joined together in amphiktyonies, religious associations centred on a sanctuary of regional importance. Such associations played no active political role in the pre-Persian era,[102] but did exhort their members to respect certain standards of behaviour in their mutual relations, including in wartime—among them the prohibition to cut off the water supply of the adversary or to take other measures that might jeopardize his (collective) survival.[103] The fact that war as such was not outlawed by the amphyktionies is another indication of its institutionalized character.

Only a small part of the available men were actually mobilized in wartime, and even they had to look after their farms and could not spend much time away. From early spring to late autumn, there were always pressing agricultural chores to be seen to. Only in the middle of summer (July/August) and in winter was there little to do in the fields;[104] however, the cold season was apparently considered too uncomfortable for fighting. Those *polítai* who farmed their land themselves—the majority—did not ordinarily own slaves. A given 'war'—'a welcome break from work in the fields'[105]—would often be over within days.[106] In the pre-Persian era, alliances between *póleis* were never extensive.[107] War was waged locally and between, at most, only a few *póleis* at a time. It has to be realized that in the pre-Persian era, but also later, neither the simple warriors nor their commanders (normally elected from among the simple warriors) were professional military personnel.[108]

The phalanx in the basic form practised at the time did not require long training. Combat made demands not so much on the skills of the fighters as it did on their discipline and solidarity. Keeping the ranks closed as well as one's nerve was what won the battle and saved fighters' lives. War was a collective test of will, quite literally challenging the members of the community to stand together. This is why it was prized, while little value was attached to innovative technology or tactics, or to material resources. For example, maritime warfare, subsequently so important, was scarcely developed in the pre-Persian period.

On the whole, war in the pre-Persian *pólis*-world was not a major cause of structural change.

By land, no war that brought about any accumulation of power took place. What war did occur was invariably fought by each against their respective neighbours. No foreign campaigns far from their homeland and designed to subjugate others were undertaken by the Greeks. For they had not yet placed themselves jointly under the authority of the largest *póleis* [*ou gar xyneistékesan pros tas megístas póleis hypékooi*]; nor did they organize joint campaigns by themselves, on an

[101] Thukydídês 5.41.
[102] Tausend (1992: 62).
[103] Adcock and Mosley (1975: 229–31); Calabi (1953: ch. 2); Meier (1990: 568).
[104] On the annual work schedule of Greek agriculture of the period, see e.g. Burford (1993: ch. 3).
[105] Bayer (1987: 274).
[106] Garlan (1989: 96–7); Manicas (1982: 679); Meier (1990: 561–2).
[107] Tausend (1992: 200–6).
[108] This is emphasized by J. F. Lazenby (1993: e.g. vii–viii, 36–9), who warns of the common tendency to consider the warfare of the period more sophisticated than it was.

equal footing. Instead, they made war on each other, each against the people of the next town [*astygeítones*].[109]

2.2.1.5 *The Persian threat and its consequences for the* pólis*-world: integration and destabilization*

The limitations imposed on Greek warfare were undermined when, from the mid-sixth century onwards, the Persian empire began to loom increasingly large on the horizon of the *pólis*-world. Although the attempt to incorporate Greece in this empire failed, it had the effect of thoroughly and enduringly throwing the Greek world off balance. It marks so important a turning point that it is used here to distinguish one era from the next. The period here called 'pre-Persian' is conventionally referred to as the 'archaic' period, whereas the following period, considered to have lasted until the conquest of the Persian empire by Alexander of Macedon, is conventionally designated as 'classical'. This terminology was originally borrowed from art history, but has long since taken on a life of its own. Somewhat questionably, the label 'archaic' connotes primitiveness, imperfection, especially if opposed to the term 'classical' with its implicit call on our admiration. There is no need for such implicitly normative terminology. The advent of the Persian threat triggered massive structural change. Since our primary concern here is the evolution of political structures, it seems appropriate to distinguish not 'archaic' from 'classical' Greece but pre-Persian Greece from Greece in the Persian era, the period of coexistence of the Greek world with the Persian empire.

The defence against the Persians. The rapid Persian expansion left the Greeks with no choice but greater integration at the expense of the proud particularism hitherto held dear. They could either accept integration in the Persian empire—which, without offering resistance, many of them did. Alternatively, if resistance was to be chosen, it required a great coalition of the *póleis* under the leadership of the largest among them. That, too, curtailed their freedom of action.

If a considerable portion of the Greek world opted against military resistance and accepted Persian overlordship, it was because in the period considered in this chapter supralocal rule had little effect on the lives of most of its subjects. The Ionian *póleis* in Asia Minor demonstrated that. They had already previously been under Lydian overlordship, which the Persian Great King, on conquering the Lydian empire, reasserted militarily against efforts by the Ionian *póleis* to regain their complete independence. The Ionian *póleis* paid dues and provided soldiers—who must have been remunerated in some form, since otherwise it would hardly have been possible to motivate them to fight and to prevent mass desertions. When the Ionian *póleis* rebelled against Persian rule in 499, they did invoke the notion of Greek liberty. But if that liberty was under threat, it was only partly because of the Persians. It was not so much, or at least not only, dissatisfaction with the Persians as such that caused the uprising, but dissatisfaction with the local strong men or 'tyrants' (*týrannoi*), whose rule was far less abstract than that of the Persians. The latter had been basing their overlordship on the loyalty of the local Greek potentates, who in return benefited from the support of the Persians. However, once the

[109] Thukydídês 1.15.

uprising had been quashed, the Persians, rather than restoring the tyrants, allowed their opponents to take power.[110]

The attitude of the strongest military power among the (as yet) free *póleis*, Lakedaímôn, was decisive. To secure their rule over the heilots, the Lakedaimonians followed certain principles designed to weaken the chance of successful rebellion. Those principles not only included their peculiar, warlike constitution, but also a conservative, moderate orientation of their foreign policy, whose major goal was to prevent foreigners from invading the southern Peloponnese and joining forces with the heilots. In the sixth century, the Lakedaimonians therefore created a sort of *cordon sanitaire* on their northern flank, consisting of friendly *póleis* tied to Lakedaímôn by bilateral treaties. Those treaties explicitly granted the Lakedaimonians *hêgemonía*, literally 'leadership'; but by the end of the century, the allies had secured the right to participate in the decision-making of the league. In any case, in the long run, the stability of the system required that the Lakedaimonians took account of the interests of their allies as well as their own.[111]

Thanks to their specially trained hoplites, who moreover were constantly available owing to the 'delegation' of agricultural labour to the heilots, and thanks to their allies, the Lakedaimonians were the only actor of more than local importance in late-sixth-century Greece. Indeed they actively projected their influence throughout the Greek world. In the 520s, they mounted an expedition against Sámos (off the coast of Asia Minor), and, if Heródotos is to be believed, even warned the Persians against interfering with Greek Asia Minor.[112] But during the decades between circa 520 and circa 488 (the precise dates are unknown), when their resolute king Kleoménês I was in office, the Lakedaimonians restricted their operations to the Greek mainland, ignoring opportunities or indeed invitations to intervene in the Greek islands or in Asia Minor—Ernst Baltrusch speaks of the 'Kleoménês doctrine'.[113] Kleoménês rejected offers of voluntary subordination even on the Greek mainland: when the Plataians sought the protection of the Lakedaimonians and volunteered as clients, they were told that they were too far away, and that they should seek the protection of the Athenians instead.[114] The Lakedaimonians intervened against tyrants. That was the purpose of the unsuccessful expedition against Sámos; and in 510, under Kleoménês' leadership, the Lakedaimonians overthrew the ruler of Athens, Hippías. Against Kleoménês' intentions, this brought to power a certain Kleisthénês, whose anti-oligarchic measures so displeased Kleoménês that after only a few years he unsuccessfully sought to restore Hippías.

No other Greek *póleis* had supralocal influence at that time, not even Athens—an uncommonly large community both demographically and in terms of its territory, the biggest in mainland Greece with the exception of Lakedaímôn. Moreover, the Athenians had on their territory the rich silver mines of Laúreion, systematically exploited since the sixth century and common property of the citizens by the fifth century. Externally, the Athenians had, it is true, already given proof of an aggressive disposition, helped no doubt by their demographic superiority. Thus, under the leadership of Miltiádês, they

[110] Heródotos 6.43.

[111] Adcock and Mosley (1975: 231–5); Welwei (1998: 13–7). On the debate about how significant the threat posed by the heilots really was in determining the policy of the Lakedaimonians, see Baltrusch (2001).

[112] Heródotos 3.45ff.; 1.153.

[113] Baltrusch (1998: 46).

[114] Heródotos 6.108.

conquered Lḗmnos with its as yet non-Greek population (after 510?) and colonized it; after 506, they sent several thousand citizens to settle in the territory of defeated Chalkís. But overall, their influence in the Greek world was as yet negligible. Their intervention against the Persians triggered a chain of events whose outcome cannot have been foreseen by those who, perhaps without thinking very much at all, took the decision. The steep rise of the Athenians in military, political, economic, demographic (by the immigration of metics), and not least cultural terms that had its ultimate origin in this decision, as well as tremendous consequences, still felt, for the history of western civilization, largely came about by a series of contingencies.

Heródotos reports that after the overthrow of Hippías, the Athenians sent envoys to Sárdeis (in western Asia Minor, near present-day Salihli), the former capital of the Lydian empire. After the conquest of that empire by the Persians in 546, which made them immediate neighbours of the Greeks as well as giving them the suzerainty, previously Lydian, over the Ionian *póleis*, the Persian Great King established his viceroy for the region at Sárdeis. Since then, the Persians had also, in 525, conquered Egypt, as well as the Greeks of Kyrḗnê (on the coast of what is now Libya), some of the Aegean islands, and only a few years previously Thrace and Macedon. Yet rather than keep their distance from the expansionist Persians, the Athenians instructed their envoys to offer them an alliance—according to Heródotos with a view to protecting themselves from efforts on the part of Kleoménês to bring down the new regime in Athens personified by Kleisthénês. (The reforms implemented by Kleisthénês after the overthrow of Hippías not only ensured the participation of all citizens in the citizens' assembly regardless of wealth, but also increased the weight of the assembly with respect to the office-holders, elected only from the higher census classes; those reforms were clearly popular.)

The envoys offered the symbolic submission to the Great King that the Persians demanded, but in Athens their behaviour was blamed. Heródotos (our only source) offers no details. He does tell us, albeit separately and without establishing any explicit link with the rejection of the proposed alliance with the Persians, that Hippías had also appeared at Sárdeis, proffering his loyalty in return for Persian support, and that the viceroy requested that the Athenians should readmit Hippías. This was in line with the general Persian policy in Asia Minor prior to the Ionian revolt. From the Persian point of view, it must have seemed easier to deal with an individual power-holder than with a committee that, moreover, was replaced annually; and the Persians may have known, or rightly assumed, that Hippías still had followers in Athens. The reaction of the new regime in Athens was not just to abandon the alliance that it had itself offered, but to adopt an actively anti-Persian stance.[115]

One is struck by the insouciance with which the Athenians disregarded the imbalance of power between them and the Persian Great King: the offer of an alliance, a clear case of 'bandwagoning' (i.e. joining rather than opposing a preponderant actor), is just as much proof of this disregard as the fact that their very next step was actually to make war on the Great King—again on their own initiative and for no compelling reason. Athens was under no threat. But it was considered the mother *pólis* of the Ionian settlers in Asia Minor, and thus the Athenians sent support for the Ionian revolt of 499, the only *pólis* outside Asia Minor to do so apart from Erétria. The Lakedaimonians declined to help the insurgents, in line with the 'Kleoménês doctrine'—though their refusal can be

[115] Heródotos 5.73, 5.96.

explained equally well by their dislike of the anti-oligarchic tendencies fuelling the revolt. Kleoménês had unwittingly promoted the same tendencies in Athens by overthrowing Hippías, an embarrassment he cannot have been keen to relive in Asia Minor. Inversely, the Athenians, apart from their supposed community of descent with the Ionian Greeks, had reason to sympathize with Ionian efforts to get rid of the local tyrants after the example of the Athenians themselves.

The uprising having been put down (494), the Great King prepared a punitive expedition against Erétria and Athens. It is possible to wonder if he would so soon have bothered to intervene in mainland Greece had he not been provoked to do so. The place cannot have seemed particularly enticing: a bunch of outwardly unimpressive, rustic towns on soil that was not very fertile, with no rich potentates or magnates anywhere in sight. 'Their wealth we know, that it is but little,' Heródotos has Mardónios tell the Great King, his point here being that that should make it easier to conquer the Greeks—but for the same reason there would have been no rush to embark on that venture in the first place.[116] Heródotos himself thought that the twenty ships from Athens (joined by five from Erétria) 'were to bring evil on both Greeks and barbarians'.[117]

He reports that the people of Erétria, which the Persians attacked first, were undecided about whether to offer resistance or evacuate the town. Having opted for resistance, they nevertheless avoided battle and allowed the Persians to mount a siege. Heródotos seems to disapprove; however, Erétria was smaller than Athens, and even the Athenians were numerically far inferior to the Persians and equally undecided about whether to offer battle. Nor did the Athenians come to the assistance of the Eretrians, despite a call for help from the latter.

Erétria was taken thanks to the assistance of pro-Persian elements of the population, who betrayed it for personal gain—says Heródotos, again without giving details. Presumably they were at least exempted from the fate of the other Eretrians, resettled in Persia. The Persians sailed on to Attikḗ, where the aged Hippías, whom they had brought along, directed their fleet to put in near Marathṓn. The coastal plain there was convenient for disembarking the army; moreover, Hippías' family traditionally had strong local support there. The Athenians encamped their own troops in the vicinity, but they, too, were uncertain about what to do next. In the literature, it is routinely implied that they had the option of retreating to the city and trying to brave a siege,[118] but this is most likely wrong. According to Heródotos, of the ten *stratêgoí* or elected commanders of the Athenians, five favoured battle and five opposed it. One of them, Miltiádês, tipped the scale for battle by winning over the polemarch (among the nine *árchontes*, the supreme officials of the *pólis*, the one responsible for military matters), who had a casting vote.

Miltiádês warns that if the Athenians 'bow their necks [*hypokýpsôsi*] to the Medes [Persians], their fate is certain, for they will be delivered over to Hippías'; he asserts that it was up to the polemarch either to enslave Athens or make it free. He adds that to avoid battle meant running the risk of great strife (*stásis megálê*) among the citizens, undermining their courage and inclining them to side with the Persians. Of course the survival of the new political order established by Kleisthénês continued to be at stake. Though popular, this new order was probably still controversial. Some rejected it, others

[116] Heródotos 7.9 (1920–5: iii 313).
[117] Heródotos 5.97; my trans.
[118] e.g. Bayer (1987: 140); Dahlheim (1994*a*: 161).

who supported it were no doubt unwilling to do so at any price. The alternative to this order, Hippías, was waiting with the Persians near Marathón.

Disembarked but ostensibly kept in check, for the time being, by the troops of the Athenians, the Persians bided their time. Presumably they, too, knew of the debate going on in Athens, and they may have been busy cultivating citizens who were on their side, or undecided. Heródotos labels the attitude of those unwilling to risk battle as 'the worse [*cheírôn*] opinion', which coming from him means pro-Persian.[119] But if the vote among the *stratêgoí* was representative of popular sentiment, the 'worse opinion' may have been that of half the citizenry. Significantly, when the practice of ostrakism was introduced from 487 onwards—enabling the citizens annually to vote one of their number into exile—for many years the candidates (whether actually expelled or not) were all accused of pro-Persian leanings; and of course those were prominent citizens, who in 490 would have been influential.[120]

Miltiádês may have had his own reasons for promoting an intransigent stance. Born around 550, he had commanded Athenian troops already under Hippías. Even before Hippías was expelled, he entered the service of the Great King, taking part in 513 in the latter's campaign against the Skythians. A participant in the Ionian uprising, he fled to Athens after its failure. There he was brought to trial because of his past under the *tyrannís*, but acquitted. As a result, he was a traitor both in Persian eyes and in the eyes of Hippías, both of whom he had cause to fear; conversely, nothing could better demonstrate his loyalty to the new regime in Athens than an aggressive attitude towards his old masters. At the same time, from personal experience in the Persian army, he may have viewed the chances of Athenian victory more optimistically than many of his fellow citizens.

Heródotos, the only good source on the events discussed, wrote some fifty or sixty years later, when many details must already have been difficult to ascertain reliably. For what it is worth, he specifically states that Erétria had defensive walls, but makes no mention of such walls for Athens. It remains controversial whether Athens at that time was fortified at all. Thukydídês unquestionably assumes pre-Persian city walls to have existed. If so, they were destroyed in the Persian sack of the city in 479, when he was probably not yet born.[121] But archaeologists (who will identify traces even of wooden structures long since rotted away, to say nothing of stone walls) have so far failed to uncover any material residue of such walls.[122] Even Thukydídês says that the new walls built in the 470s were moved outward in all directions, covering a much larger area. That suggests that the putative old walls offered insufficient protection for a community the size of Athens—of course many of those living in the countryside (*chôra*) would have sought refuge there if possible, not just the permanent inhabitants of the city. Indeed, F. E. Winter points to various evidence from the period before 490 indicating that defending the city against a siege was out of the question.[123]

[119] Heródotos 6.109 (1920–5: 265).

[120] Murray (1993: 283–7).

[121] Thukydídês 1.89 with 1.93, 6.57.

[122] Hornblower (1991: 135–6). A more recent, comprehensive archaeological survey of Athens (Camp 2001) does not refer to any pre-Persian city walls, or to the controversy about them.

[123] Winter (1971: 61–4); cf. Lazenby (1993: 52). Heródotos tells us that the Persian commander Mardónios, on withdrawing from Athens in 479, 'burnt Athens, and utterly overthrew and demolished whatever wall or house or temple was left standing' (9.13, 1920–5: iv 171). The word rendered as 'wall' is *teíchos*, which is normally used of fortifications; Heródotos may be referring either to the walls of the *akrópolis* (which was definitely fortified), or to the old, inadequate city walls posited by Winter.

If a siege could not be risked, there was still another option: to do what the Eretrians had thought of doing, what (as Heródotos narrates) had previously been done by the inhabitants of the island *póleis* of Náxos and Dêlos, which lay along the route taken by the Persians, and what the Athenians themselves were actually to do ten years later: evacuate the city. But in 490, the resulting upheaval and partial dispersal of the citizens would have strengthened those arguing not to bother and, rather, to come to terms with the Persians. In other words, for those Athenians who were willing to defend the city the sole option was attack, the alternative not a siege but surrender: as, indeed, Miltiádês in Heródotos is saying. It is contingencies that explain the decision to fight—the fear of Hippías being restored and the lack of adequate fortifications. The decision is taken despite the fact that with the exception of some troops from Plataiaí the Athenians are on their own. Indeed the Lakedaimonians have been called to the rescue—informed by a runner, they march for Athens, willing to intervene now that the Persians are threatening to expand to the Greek mainland. But although the Lakedaimonians cover the distance to Athens in only three days (and that means, practically at the double), the Athenians do not wait for them. The Lakedaimonians arrive a day late: their fault for having delayed their departure from religious motives, if we are to believe Heródotos. I am not sure that we should. Heródotos has a marked penchant for blaming others for all sorts of things rather than allow the Athenians (his heroes though he himself was from Asia Minor) to appear in a bad light.

Heródotos also suggests that Miltiádês deliberately delayed the battle. According to him, the supreme command normally rotated among the ten *stratêgoí* on a daily basis, but for this battle had been given to Miltiádês out of turn. Nevertheless Miltiádês supposedly waited until the day when it would have been his turn anyway. That is all that Heródotos says about why the battle occurred on the day that it did. As it stands, the story makes no obvious sense. J. F. Lazenby calls it 'most implausible' and surmises that the battle was really fought at the initiative of the Persians—which Heródotos would have been loath to admit, because it would have made the Athenians look less heroic. Is it an accident that the battle took place when the Lakedaimonians had almost reached Attikḗ? If Lazenby is right, did the Persians just lose patience or were they informed of the imminent arrival of a strong relief force? Heródotos does not tell us whether the Athenians or the Persians knew how close the Lakedaimonians were. If he is right and it was indeed Miltiádês who set the date for battle, it is conceivable that Miltiádês, safe, somewhat at least, in the knowledge that if the Athenians were defeated the Lakedaimonians would be at hand to rescue them, wished to deny the Lakedaimonians any part in a possible victory. For this would have enhanced their (i.e. Kleoménês') influence in Athens and thus threatened the new regime.[124]

During the Ionian uprising, the Athenians appear to have had little contact with the enemy. To be sure, the insurgents actually occupied Sárdeis, the seat of the Persian viceroy, and burned it down (by accident, it seems). However, the citadel remained in Persian hands, and rather than face the approaching Persian relief force the Greeks beat a quick retreat. At Marathṓn, however, the Athenians and Plataians drive the enemy back onto his ships, to general surprise probably not excluding their own: 'Till then, the Greeks were affrighted by the very name of the Medes [= Persians].'[125] A necessary result

[124] Cf. Lazenby (1993: 58–62; quotation on p. 58).
[125] Heródotos 6.109–17, quotation in 6.114 (1920–5: iii 269).

of this victory was to put the Athenians still more firmly on the Persian agenda as an actor to be eliminated, giving them a key role in Greece that they had never aimed for and which even now they were reluctant to play. But a new Persian attack was practically certain, even though, delayed by extensive preparations and a revolt in Egypt, it was ten years in coming. When, in 480, it was finally launched, this time both by sea and by land, the Athenians could not but take upon themselves a large part of the burden of the common defence of Greece.

The attempt of a coalition of *póleis*, Athens and Lakedaímôn chief among them, to stop the advance of the Persian fleet north of the island of Eúboia and that of the Persian army at the mountain pass of the Thermopýlai roundly fails. Once again the Athenians do not risk a siege, this time evacuating their city instead. The Great King has it systematically destroyed, including the temples on the *akrópolis* (though not without sacrificing to the Greek gods to placate them). But whereas before 490 the Athenians had not had any fleet to speak of, one of their leading figures, Themistoklḗs, has since persuaded them, with great difficulty, to invest in ships.[126] It is to their new fleet that the Athenians owe their military and political survival. Heródotos makes clear that after the loss of their city the fleet is the only reason why the Athenians continue to have any influence in the decision-making of the anti-Persian coalition, enabling them to prevent the coalition from abandoning Attikḗ to the enemy and retreating to the Peloponnese. Heródotos even has Themistoklḗs warn the coalition partners that the fleet could be used against them—anticipating the future behaviour of the Athenians whether that story is true or not.[127]

The coalition, thanks in large part to the Athenians, wins the naval battle of Salamís near Athens, destroying the Persian fleet. But the Persian land army is sufficient by itself to subjugate Greece, and in light of the constant squabbles within the coalition there can be little doubt that it would have fallen apart all by itself, had the Persian commander, Mardónios, but waited long enough. To be sure, it was not easy to keep a large army in a foreign land together, and supplied. But for the time being, the situation seems to have given Mardónios no cause for worry, supported as he was by some of the Greek *póleis* themselves, notably Thebes. If but a few little things had gone differently, the history of western civilization might have followed an entirely different course. It was by undeserved good fortune that the coalition hoplites got one last chance to battle the Persian invasion force jointly.

In 479, near Plataiaí, the two armies face each other for days, neither side taking the initiative for battle—Mardónios, if he had any grasp of the situation, from the realization that time was working for him, the coalition because it lacked leadership, unity, and self-confidence. Continual pin-prick attacks by Persian cavalry combine with ongoing altercations among coalition commanders and insufficient food and water to undermine Greek morale. Eventually, the decision is taken to withdraw to new positions, a manoeuvre that almost ends in complete chaos and which would have made the Greek lack of discipline and central coordination very apparent to the Persian side had it not been undertaken at night. Even so, the Persian troops clearly felt encouraged, too much so: in the morning, either Mardónios himself or some of his fighters loose their nerve

[126] For an overview of the relevant evidence, see Lazenby (1993: 84).
[127] Heródotos 8.61.

and strike prematurely. The lightly armed Persian contingents are crushed by the Greek hoplites, superior in close combat.[128]

It is worth at this point to consider the relative strength of the two parties to this conflict from today's perspective and as it probably appeared at the time. We tend to perceive the situation as it would be presented in today's television news and as indeed it is presented in any historical atlas: as a map modelling *space* to scale. As we see it, an actor in 'international' politics is the more important, by and large, the bigger it is on the map—not every big country is a great power, but no small country is. By that standard, the giant Persian empire should have had no difficulty in prevailing over small and disunited Greece.

Indeed, the resources potentially available to the Great King were enormous. Unfortunately for him, mobilizing them was not easy. The gain brought by the geographic extent of the empire was partially compensated by the vast distances within it, given the difficulties of communication and transport. The attempted Persian conquest of Greece took years of preparation. The planning, organizing, and implementing must have entailed the movement of messengers, goods, troops, supervisors, and support teams over a cumulative total of hundreds of thousands of kilometres even if despatching, for example, a given body of troops is statistically counted as a single movement. No doubt in large part for that reason, having failed the first time around the attempt was not repeated.

It seems that people at the time indeed conceived of space in terms of distances rather than of geographical extent. A passage in Heródotos shows that maps existed but—clearly because they were an oddity—no word for them (otherwise Heródotos could have named the artefact in question instead of describing it). In 499, Aristagóras of Mílêtos arrives in Spártê and requests support for the Ionian uprising from king Kleoménês. More precisely, he asks Kleoménês to conquer the Persian empire—a logical strategy in the sense that anything else could only have been a temporary expedient. 'When he had audience of the king (so the Lakedaimonians say) he brought with him a bronze tablet on which the contours of all the earth were engraved.' With the help of this bronze tablet, Aristagóras explains the geography of the Persian empire to Kleoménês. But the king refuses to attempt to conquer the empire. Not because it is too large or too powerful—but because the royal residence, Súsa (Susha, Shush in what is now Iran), is too far away from the Aegean coast.

Aristagóras (imprudently, Heródotos thinks) admits that it would take three months to get there. Heródotos offers detailed calculations of his own according to which Súsa was 13,500 stades or ninety days' march distant, corroborating Aristagóras' figure—except, Hérodotos observes, that this was only the length of the 'royal road' from Sárdeis to Súsa. Strictly speaking one had to add the road from the port of Éphesos to Sárdeis, another 540 stades or three days' march. 14,040 stades is 2,668 km (1,668 miles), a plausible figure. Kleoménês' reaction to being told that he would be on the road for three months is abrupt: he 'cut short all the rest that Aristagóras began to tell him about the journey, and bade his Milesian guest depart from Spártê before sunset'—on the grounds that the Lakedaimonians could not possibly leave the coast so far behind them.[129]

[128] Cf. Lazenby (1993: ch. 9), offering an interpretation of the battle somewhat different from that of Heródotos.

[129] Heródotos 5.49–50 (1920–5: iii 51, 55). Concerning the question of how geographical space was perceived it is interesting that Thukydídês (1.10) describes the Lakedaimonians as occupying 'two fifths of the Peloponnese'. Today's historical maps concur—but how did Thukydídês arrive at such data?

Yet, conversely, the Persian side had a similar problem. From the Persian point of view the sea, which for Kleoménês meant escape, safety, was a further impediment. Great King Xérxês (Chshayarsha) took part in the Greek campaign (at least as long as it was successful), thus drastically shortening his lines of communication as far as that campaign was concerned. But while he was with his army he was at least 4,000 km of road (2,500 miles) away from his residence Súsa and a further 500 km (300 miles) from Persépolis (Parsa), his other, newer residence—since both on his way to Athens and on his return he preferred to take the route via the Hellespont (the Dardanelles) rather than cross the Aegean. It was from Súsa or Persépolis that the preparation of the campaign had had to be coordinated and supervised, and if anything went wrong, relief could not be brought quickly. Aristagóras' call for conquest of the empire in itself suggests that those who, like the people of Ionian Mílêtos, knew Persian rule at first hand were not necessarily very intimidated by it. Likewise, in Athens it was Miltiádês, himself a former Persian commander and veteran of the Ionian uprising, who pushed for battle. Later, in the fourth century, calls to bring the empire under Greek rule were commonplace, as we already saw with Isokrátês.

Salamís or Plataiaí would not have been possible without the Athenians, but not without the Lakedaimonians, either. Their 'natural' leadership of the defence against the Persians was not questioned by anyone. After Plataiaí, however, a Greek counter-offensive was launched, with the Athenians taking over the leadership from the Lakedaimonians. It is not clear whether or to what extent the Lakedaimonians were offended by this. Evidently, however, they were not willing to continue investing resources against the Persians now that they had been removed from where the geostrategic interests of the Lakedaimonians lay, that is, the Greek mainland. It was, thus, with the Athenians in command that the *póleis* of Asia Minor were freed from Persian rule. The Athenians organized them and other Aegean *póleis* into a permanent defensive alliance, often referred to in the literature as the Delian League, since its treasury was originally on the island of Dêlos. Period authors normally speak of 'the Athenians/Lakedaimonians and their allies'. For the sake of simplicity in what follows, I will speak of the 'Aegean league' and the 'Peloponnesian league', or alternatively, in the case of the latter, of 'the Peloponnesians' (which period authors do, too).[130]

The rise of the Athenians and the bipolarization of the *pólis*-world. For the Lakedaimonians, the necessity to control the heilots precluded permanent commitments far from home. Moreover, being further removed from the Persian threat than the Athenians, they were both less concerned by it and less able to react to it. I have already referred to the (putative) self-limitation of the 'Kleoménês doctrine'. In conservative Lakedaímôn, foreigners were distrusted, traders discouraged, and city-dwellers, non-existent. Thukydídês notes that in Lakedaímôn there were no outwardly visible signs of power or greatness, 'since they have not collected the *pólis* into a single settlement or invested lavishly in temples and other buildings, preferring to live as village-dwellers in the old Greek manner'.[131] Exceptionally for the *pólis*-world, Lakedaímôn retained the institution of kingship, with, curiously, not one but two kings representing distinct dynasties. This kingship was not all that different from other *pólis* offices in that it did

[130] On the Aegean league, see e.g. Adcock and Mosley (1975: 235–9); Welwei (1998: 172–5, 203–15).
[131] Thukydídês 1.10.

not entail supreme power across the board but was limited to certain clearly defined functions; except that, unlike ordinary *pólis* offices, it was hereditary and for life. Apart from a religious role, the two kings served mainly as military leaders. Internally they had less power than the five ephors (literally, 'overseers'). Elected annually by and from the citizens' assembly, ephors probably held that post only once in their lives and thus had no motive to pander to anyone.

Athens offers a different picture. The discovery of sea power by the Athenians, triggered by the Persian menace, had grave consequences for the entire *pólis*-world. With the Persian threat now held at bay the fleet could be put to use against fellow Greeks. But it was a military instrument incompatible with the limited warfare of the pre-Persian era.

At first, it was not just the Athenians who supplied ships but also some of the allies, though most were happy to leave the provision of ships to the Athenians and to contribute only financially. The Athenians soon saw the advantage of this for themselves. The money paid by the allies permitted them to keep in being a vast maritime force that other *póleis* could not challenge. Instead, they found to their dismay that they were no longer free to withdraw from the league or to withhold their dues, despite the fact that the Athenians disposed of this revenue as they liked. Around 454, the league treasury was moved from Dêlos to Athens. The great temples on the Athenian *akrópolis*, rebuilt in their present form in the years that followed, still document the liberties taken with what was supposedly a common defence fund—Periklês attracted criticism over this even in Athens but emerged unscathed from the scandal.[132] Around 450, the Athenians actually made peace with the Great King, but by that time their original *hêgemonía* or leadership of free partners for common defence had become *archê*—rule, dominion; a quasi-colonial maritime empire. Nominally, the members of the league remained autonomous *póleis*. However, not only were they taxed, but some of them had to accept Athenian garrisons or—especially and increasingly after 450—the allotting of some of their land to Athenian citizens. If we remember that citizens in the *pólis*-world were not ordinarily taxed, with the taxation of the metics a sign of their low status, and that in the *pólis*-world few things were politically more important than questions of landownership, it is not hard to imagine the feelings of the 'allies'.

At the same time, the Athenian political system, the famed *dêmokratía*, became more and more radical. I use the Greek word since what was meant by it in the fifth or fourth century BCE has nothing to do with what now is known as 'democracy'; Egon Flaig has aptly called the recycling of the word 'one of the most grandiose terminological expropriations of the modern era'.[133]

Kleisthénês (late sixth century) strengthened the *ekklêsía*, the citizens' assembly: he ensured that all citizens regardless of wealth were entitled to vote in the assembly, and required the elected office-holders to have the backing of the *ekklêsía* for their measures. But although Kleisthénês also reduced the importance of the leading families and their followings, the office-holders remained powerful, and they were only recruited from the upper census classes (that is, the richer citizens). That latter restriction was gradually removed in the fifth century. Moreover, by the late fifth century, most office-holders were no longer elected but chosen by lot. The one element of today's 'democracy' that allows

[132] Plutarch, *Periklês* 12.
[133] Flaig (1997: 81); my trans.

ordinary citizens a very limited amount of political participation, elections, was suspect in the eyes of those striving for *dêmokratía*, since elections are not usually won by the nameless poor.

The number of office-holders increased greatly, with greater specialization, lest one man have too many functions and thus power. An office could only be held for a year at a time. There was almost no permanent administrative personnel, a deliberate choice since any administration will over time accumulate knowledge and routines that restrict the freedom of manoeuvre of any temporary office-holders supposedly in charge of it. All office-holders were obliged to account regularly for their activities to the *ekklêsía*, and might be asked to do so out of turn at any moment. Many office-holders received a stipend—moderate, but important to ensure that less rich citizens, who otherwise would have had no income if they held office instead of working, were not excluded. The citizens disposed of effective instruments for disciplining office-holders or even those among them who did not hold any office but were merely influential. Such instruments were wielded by large bodies of citizens—the *ekklêsía*, and the law courts—to ensure that the bulk of the less well-off was adequately represented. The law courts were composed of citizens chosen by lot: at least 201 in private litigation, at least 401 if public issues were at stake. Outside the courts, all decisions were taken by the *ekklêsía*. It could only vote on issues on which the 'council' (*boulḗ*) had recommended a course of action, but was not bound by the recommendation. The council itself, probably in more or less daily session, consisted of 500 citizens chosen by lot. It is crucially important to note that in this system there was no government. The nine *árchontes*, the supreme officials of old, still existed, but even they basically executed decisions rather than deciding themselves. The only important office-holders that were still elected were the *stratêgoí*, the military commanders (there were always several, of equal rank). Moreover, *stratêgoí* could be re-elected. It is this position that Periklḗs retained over many years.

The idea behind having all decisions taken by a great number of citizens and of abolishing most elections in favour of selection by lot was to ensure that the will of the majority of the citizens prevailed against the interests of the elite. Like the transformation of communities headed by kings or similar leaders into self-ruling communities of citizens, as a result, not least, of the introduction of the hoplite phalanx, the evolution of the *dêmokratía*—the logical continuation of that transformation—was helped by military factors, more precisely the discovery of sea power. To man the triremes—warships with three decks of rowers superimposed on one another—on which the new power of Athens rested and which required some 170 oarsmen each, one needed the bulk of the less well-off citizens. Unable to afford armour, previously they had played no role in war or politics. The arrival of the fleet changed that drastically.

According to Thukydídes, Athens had 300 triremes at the beginning of the war against the Lakedaimonians in 431, of which during the war up to 250 were in service at the same time.[134] That means some 42,500 oarsmen—more than Athens had citizens. Non-citizens were allowed to serve to make up the shortfall. Clearly, they were not hard to find: service in the fleet paid enough money to be attractive to that vast majority of the population that did not have very much of it. But those oarsmen who were citizens, and proud of the fact, wanted more than just money: like the hoplites of the early *pólis*, they realized that they were militarily indispensable and, therefore, could not be disregarded

[134] Thukydídês 2.13, 3.17.

politically. The 'ship rabble'—*nautikós óchlos*, an expression found both in Thukydídês and in Aristotle[135]—was not prone to moderation. In foreign politics it was aggressive, from sound material motives. Service in the fleet was economically important to it, as were the shipyards and the many workshops connected to them. Furthermore, poorer citizens could hope to be allotted land within the Athenian *archê*. In the fifty years preceding the outbreak of the great war of 431, an estimated 10,000 Athenian citizens received new land outside Attikê;[136] and land continued to be allotted after 431. In part, this was taken away from the allies; or it belonged to new communities founded outside the territory of existing *póleis*.

The aggressive pursuit of Athenian interests after the Persian wars created growing tension with the other big power in Greece, Lakedaímôn. From about 460 onwards, there were armed clashes between Athens on the one hand and Lakedaímôn on the other—though in truth some of the allies of the Lakedaimonians played a bigger role in this conflict than the Lakedaimonians themselves. In 446, a peace treaty was concluded for a duration of thirty years.[137] Meanwhile, it became difficult for individual *póleis* to stay neutral. When two *póleis*, one or both of which were still unaligned, quarrelled, they hastened to seek the backing of one or the other alliance, resulting in increasing bipolarization. It is often assumed that there was an 'ideological' split as well, with the Lakedaimonians supposedly promoting or even imposing oligarchy within their clientèle and the Athenians *dêmokratía*. However, this notion, no doubt inspired by the experience of the Cold War in the second half of the twentieth century, is questionable.[138]

In the First Book of his great history of his time, Thukydídês relates the 'accusations and disputes', *aitíai kai diaphoraí*,[139] that brought about a new and, this time, serious confrontation between the two blocs. The *aitíai kai diaphoraí* provide a case study of the relations between autonomous actors in the Greek world which in its comparative wealth of detail has no parallel in the extant sources from the period. Despite the richness of this account, the events reported by Thukydídês have been the subject of much controversy and, in my view, have often been interpreted wrongly. It is worthwhile, therefore, to examine the *aitíai kai diaphoraí*, though from lack of space disputed questions can at best be alluded to. It is also necessary to bear in mind that although Thukydídês has an agenda, he offers very few explicit comments (more on this in Section 2.5). The reader must draw his or her own conclusions. Hence, to the extent that what follows contains interpretation it is my own.

In the 430s, war breaks out between Corinth and Kérkyra (Corfu) over the question which of them was to be regarded as the mother *pólis* of Epídamnos (Durrës in what is now Albania). Kérkyra had itself been founded by the Corinthians, but at this point had been at odds with them for some time. Embittered by the initial success of the Kerkyraians and the means employed to secure it, the Corinthians prepare to re-establish militarily their old influence not only in Epídamnos but also in Kérkyra.[140]

[135] Thukydídês 8.72; Aristotle, *Politiká* 1327*b* 7.

[136] Welwei (1998: 217).

[137] The date of the peace treaty is 446 or 445. Owing to the particularities of the Greek calendar, an event can often be dated no more exactly than as having taken place in one of two successive years. For simplicity's sake, and since greater precision is not needed for the purposes of this study, in such cases only the earlier year is given.

[138] The evidence is complex and contradictory. Cf. e.g. Welwei (1998: 135) (Lakedaímôn), 212 (Athens).

[139] Thukydídês 1.23.

[140] Salmon (1984: 285).

This motivates the previously non-aligned Kerkyraians to propose an alliance to the Athenians. In doing so their intention is not to submit to Athens—the Athenians had 'free' allies besides those from whom they exacted tribute. The Corinthians for their part are already part of the Peloponnesian league led by Lakedaímôn. Some of the other allies of the Lakedaimonians participate in the Corinthians' war against the Kerkyraians, though Lakedaímôn itself does not.

In Athens, the Kerkyraians point out that the 446 peace treaty allows neutrals to join either alliance. The Corinthians retort that given the ongoing war between Kérkyra and Corinth, an alliance between Kérkyra and Athens would be a hostile act against Corinth and thus a breach of the 446 peace. It so happens that Kérkyra has the biggest fleet in Greece after Athens—but in the Adriatic, well away from the Aegean, the maritime sphere of influence of the Athenians. If, thus, there is no naval competition between Kérkyra and Athens, Corinth by contrast is in competition with both: situated on a narrow bridge of land separating the Adriatic from the Aegean, it has ports on both shores. The Corinthians have the third biggest fleet after the other two, and because of past conflict dislike the Athenians as much as they dislike the Kerkyraians. If the Corinthians prevail over the Kerkyraians, their naval weight with regard to Athens is bound to grow; conversely, with the Kerkyraians as allies, the Athenians could tie down the Corinthians in the Adriatic. At bottom, thus, what is at stake is control of the Kerkyraian fleet, which Corinthians and Athenians begrudge one another. Torn between this strategic consideration and their wish not to breach the 446 treaty, the Athenians at last opt for a 'semi-alliance': they will only support the Kerkyraians if the town of Kérkyra itself is attacked.

In judging this to be in conformity with the treaty, as they mostly do, even today's historians allow themselves to be blinded by what looks like a clever distinction but is really without legal relevance. The treaty obliges the parties to keep the peace without allowing for exceptions, and military intervention by the Athenians against the Corinthians breaches the treaty no matter on what pretext. Even the mere threat to attack the Corinthians in certain circumstances (of whatever nature) is in contradiction with the treaty. Indeed, the Athenians themselves regard it as likely that the Peloponnesians will see their 'defensive alliance' with Kérkyra as a violation of the treaty.[141]

The Athenians deploy ships near the island of Kérkyra, with instructions to remain passive as long as the Corinthians do not threaten the town of Kérkyra itself. But when a naval battle takes place close to the town (given their new alliance, the Kerkyraians had little motive to fight it anywhere else) and goes badly for the Kerkyraians, the Athenians intervene and prevent their defeat. Attention now focuses on Poteídaia, a town on the Chalkidikḗ peninsula founded by the Corinthians but part of the *archḗ*, the empire of the Athenians: the Athenians fear that in retaliation the Corinthians might incite Poteídaia to defect from Athens, possibly taking other members of the Aegean league in that part of Greece with them. This danger seems the greater as the king of nearby Macedon, Perdíkkas, also seeks to bring about such a rebellion against Athens, since the Athenians are supporting a party within Macedon seeking to overthrow him.

Thukydídês' account creates the impression that the rough treatment of Poteídaia by the Athenians actually hastens its defection. Not only do the Athenians order the Poteidaians to break off their traditionally close relations with Corinth and depose the officials annually sent them from there, but they also order the demolition of a key section

[141] Thukydídês 1.44.

of the city walls of Poteídeia, and demand hostages as a guarantee of good behaviour. The Poteidaians refuse, and the Athenians lay siege to the town—though not before troops from Corinth arrive to reinforce its defence. Encouraged by Perdíkkas, other *póleis* in the region also renounce their links to Athens. By contrast, the Lakedaimonians stand by, even though they, too, had promised the Poteidaians support in case of attack.[142]

The Athenians behave aggressively not just towards the Corinthians, but also against the people of Mégara. Because of a conflict with the Corinthians, their neighbours, the Megarians had switched their allegiance from the Peloponnesian to the Aegean league. Dissatisfied, they had soon rebelled against the Athenians and gone back to the Peloponnesian camp. As a result, relations between Athens and Mégara are as poisoned as those between Athens and Corinth. The Athenians pass a 'vote concerning the Megarians, by which they were forbidden to use the ports within the *archḗ* [empire] of the Athenians or the Attic *agorá* [the main square in Athens]'.[143]

Thukydídês goes on to sum up the official justification for this vote, which included the alleged violation of a religious prohibition by the Megarians. That may explain the specific nature of their punishment, for which there is a parallel in Plátôn: 'He who deliberately . . . kills a relative [literally 'one of the same stock': the word could also mean a compatriot or fellow citizen] shall first of all be excluded from ordinary intercourse. He shall not [by his presence] tarnish the sanctuaries, the *agorá*, the ports, or any other public meeting place.'[144] As pointed out, there was no 'police' in the Greek world, no monopoly on legitimate violence. A murderer could not simply be overpowered and arrested—but he could be proclaimed impure and turned into an outcast (the quoted passage goes on to emphasize the religious dimension of evil-doing, which makes the perpetrator an enemy of the gods). In the case of the Megarians, it probably works the other way around: by imposing a punishment suitable for the most despicable criminals, the Athenians express forcefully that that is what they consider the Megarians to be.

The punishment of the Megarians is almost universally interpreted in the literature as directed against their trade, as 'an act of economic warfare', in the words of Robert Gilpin.[145] G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, who also draws attention to the Plátôn passage, provides a detailed if far from universally accepted rebuttal of this common view.[146] As we saw already, 'economic warfare' was unknown in this period. Trade was not important enough for economic sanctions to have much impact. The expression 'the Megarians' must designate the citizens of Mégara—but as we saw, citizens would not normally be merchants, certainly not if they were rich and influential. As in Athens, trade in Mégara must have been largely in the hands of metics and foreigners. Indeed, according to de Ste. Croix it was metics from *Athens* who dominated trade with Mégara, situated like Athens on the Saronic Gulf and only about 45 km (28 miles) distant.

To be sure, Aristophánês' comedy *The Acharnians*, performed in Athens in 425, suggests that the vote against them caused starvation among the Megarians. At the beginning of the play, the main character curses the war for having forced him to leave his old home in the countryside: now settled in Athens-City, he resentfully has to buy the things that formerly he could harvest. So he privately declares peace on the

[142] Thukydídês 1.58. Cf. Salmon (1984: 294)—though Salmon I think reads too much into this passage.
[143] Thukydídês 1.139.
[144] Plátôn, *Nómoi* 871*a*.
[145] Gilpin (1981: 218).
[146] de Ste. Croix (1972: ch. 7).

Lakedaimonians (even though they have 'cut my vines, too'—an allusion to their raids of Attikḗ) and designates a square in front of his house a market place where they and their allies are welcome. A relieved trader from Mégara soon finds his way there, though unfortunately all he has to sell are his three little daughters, famished like himself, whom he dresses up as piglets for the occasion (the idea being that piglets would be bought to fatten them, thereby saving the little girls from starvation). Aside from piglets, trade goods mentioned in the play include hares and leverets, wild fowl, fish, cucumbers, herbs, garlic, salt, lamp-wicks, rush-mats, pottery; nothing likely to make anyone rich. Payment is not in money but in produce—consistent with the observation that 'Athens minted no coins with a value low enough to make them suitable for retail trade before the fourth century BC, showing that even during the fifth-century empire most buying and selling proceeded on the basis of barter.'[147]

Alas, a reliable understanding of the humorous allusions of this play would require precise knowledge of the facts—which is just what we lack. The bottom line seems to be that the measure is indeed portrayed here as affecting the trade of the Megarians. But, firstly, it is impossible to deduce the extent of the damage from the play, since we have no way of gauging the comic exaggeration clearly involved; it is not even unthinkable that the economic impact conjured up by Aristophánês is entirely a comic fantasy. Thus, asked whether he has garlic to offer, the trader from Mégara replies that this is not possible, since whenever the Athenians raid the territory of the Megarians they dig out all the garlic: if this clearly is not to be taken seriously, why should anything else in the play? Secondly, Aristophánês permits no inference on whether the economic impact, if, and to the extent that, it existed, was the purpose of the measure or merely a side effect.

If the vote was *intended* to have an economic effect, why bother to dress it up as religiously motivated? And why direct it only against Mégara and not against, for example, Corinth, too—at least as hated in Athens and at least as commercially active as Mégara (in fact, no doubt more so since it was bigger)? Why, in fact, is there no record of similar sanctions in the entire period covered in this chapter? Conversely, why does the vote against the Megarians cause such enormous indignation, reflected in all the sources that report it? Evidently because it was extremely unusual, and regarded as almost impardonably dishonourable and offensive—the sort of thing that only the Athenians, bullies with no sense of decency or respect for others, would do. It is possible, however, that unlike what de Ste. Croix suggests humiliating the Megarians was not the only motive of the Athenians. We saw that they demanded of the Poteidaians the severing of all relations with Corinth and the expulsion of the representatives of that city. Similarly, they may have wished to cut off contact between Mégara and those *póleis* originally founded from Mégara and which, like Poteídaia, were now part of the *archḗ*—among them Chalkêdṓn and Byzántion, facing each other on the Bósporos, that strategically important sea lane through which much of the grain destined for Athens passed. As it happens, Byzántion had only recently rebelled against the Athenians.[148]

Simon Hornblower notes that whereas the passage from the *Nómoi* also excludes evil-doers from the sanctuaries (temples), Thukydídês fails to mention them, which Hornblower regards as corroboration of the view that the import of the measure was really economic rather than religious. It seems bold to read so much into an omission.

[147] Sallares (1991: 57–8).
[148] Dahlheim (1994*a*: 214–15).

But while the suspicion that the measure was not really, or not only, motivated by religious considerations is one that I share, the omission of sanctuaries is as consistent with my hypothesis that the Megarians were to be kept out for political reasons as with the conventional positing of economic reasons. In today's diplomatic language, it would appear, then, that rather than impose an embargo the Athenians declare the Megarians 'undesirable aliens'—in a manner, though, that clearly was not considered at all diplomatic.[149]

According to other sources, people at the time considered the Mégara imbroglio as the main trigger of the war. Even Thukydídês, who clearly intended to show other, less talked-about factors to have been at least as important, brings it up in the context of repeated offers by the Lakedaimonians to call off the war, already decided by them, on three conditions, the first and, as Thukydídês himself notes, most important of which was the repeal of the measure against Mégara (the other two being withdrawal of the Athenians from Poteídaia and from Aígina).[150] Otherwise, however, Thukydídês concentrates on the tension between Athens and Corinth. Much has been written about this 'peculiar' choice of main focus. In my opinion, it is motivated by the fact that the Corinthians play a more active, indeed the decisive role in the run-up to the war. Without their insistence on war, it might have been avoided.

Having been attacked by the Athenians both off Kérkyra and in Poteídaia, the Corinthians consider themselves to be already at war with Athens, and turn to the Lakedaimonians for support under the terms of their alliance. Already in the conflict ended by the 446 treaty, the Corinthians had played a much more active role than the Lakedaimonians themselves.[151] They may have been keen not to let the Lakedaimonians evade their responsibilities again. Inversely, Thukydídês has the Corinthians claim that it was they who, in 440, prevented support from the Peloponnesians for the rebellion of Sámos against Athens by voicing their opposition in Lakedaímôn[152]—this, too, underlines their weight within the alliance. As early as 506, it was the Corinthians who foiled the attempt of king Kleoménês to restore Hippías to power in Athens by refusing to participate in the campaign. Later, in 421, the Corinthians will again give proof of their independence when, to the consternation of the Lakedaimonians, they fail to join the peace that, after ten years of war and arduous negotiations, the Lakedaimonians conclude with Athens (nor do the Megarians join that peace).

The Lakedaimonians clearly are not very keen on war with Athens, much as some authors, like G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, have sought to brush the evidence the other way—that evidence is admittedly sparse but, as far as I can see, quite consistent in depicting the Lakedaimonians as much less bellicose than the Athenians or Corinthians. As Thukydídês

[149]Hornblower (2002: 108). Hornblower (ibid.) seems to think that pointing to the non-mention of sanctuaries settles the question of whether economic damage was *intended* by the measure. 'But was it done? There is positive evidence not only in Aristophanes (*Acharnians* 515–39, cf. *Peace* 605–27) but in Thucydides himself (1.120.2, a speech of the Corinthians).' Aristophánês has already been discussed. The passage from the speech of the Corinthians is a warning to the towns of the hinterland not to be indifferent to the fate of the coastal towns, lest they 'find it more difficult to bring down their produce, and to receive in exchange what the sea gives to the mainland'—a warning of a possible future inconvenience. The Megarians are not mentioned. Even assuming an implicit allusion here, this hardly qualifies as 'positive evidence' of economic damage having already been inflicted on anyone.

[150]Thukydídês 1.139.

[151]Salmon (1984: ch. 19).

[152]Thukydídês 1.40–3.

tells it, the Lakedaimonians have long fretted about the aggressive behaviour of the Athenians, but so far without perceiving any serious threat to themselves. In order to change that, the Corinthians threaten to rescind their alliance with Lakedaímôn, even hinting at the possibility of an alternative alliance. Most commentators think that the allusion is to a possible alliance with Árgos, situated on the Peloponnese and a traditional adversary of Lakedaímôn. De Ste. Croix, however, points out that a thirty-year peace treaty between the two still had more than a decade to run, and that the Corinthians are really thinking of an alliance with Athens[153]—an even greater threat for Lakedaímôn. To be sure, Corinth and Athens were long-standing enemies. But according to Thukydídês, the original reason for this was the switch of the Megarians from the Peloponnesian camp to an alliance with Athens. This switch, too, was unexpected, Mégara and Athens also having been traditional enemies up till then.[154]

So the Corinthians challenge the Lakedaimonians either to allow the Peloponnesian league to suffer a devastating blow, or to demonstrate their leadership of that league. By threatening to defect, the Corinthians, provoked by the Athenians, expose Lakedaímôn to a potentially mortal danger. As we saw, the safety, indeed the continued existence of this *pólis* was founded on a *cordon sanitaire* around the territory under its direct control. But that *cordon sanitaire*, the league with other, friendly Peloponnesian *póleis*, in turn presupposed the great respect for the Lakedaimonians as *hêgemôn* of the alliance, respect built on past achievements but not immune to manifestations of present weakness.[155]

Lakedaímôn cannot accept passively the behaviour of the Athenians towards its allies Corinth and Mégara without losing its credibility as leader of the Peloponnesian league. But the 446 treaty provides for arbitration of disputes. The Athenians indicate that they will accept arbitration. Clearly, in Lakedaímôn, too, influential people (represented in Thukydídês by king Archídamos II) prefer arbitration. But the Corinthians do not. Arbitration might be attractive to the Lakedaimonians because it would dispense them from the obligation to fight. But the Corinthians, who are fighting already, have nothing to gain from it: the arbiters' decision would necessarily hand Poteídaia back to the Athenians (since the 446 treaty listed it as part of the Aegean league) and condemn the Corinthians for supporting it against Athens. So, by threatening to defect, the Corinthians compel the Lakedaimonians not to procrastinate any longer but to declare war on the Athenians. At least that is the background—the immediate trigger of the Lakedaimonians' decision being the overbearing behaviour of a delegation of Athenians before a citizens' assembly in Spártê.[156]

In addition to the *aitíai kai diaphoraí*, Thukydídês famously offers a 'truest cause' of this war, which nowadays is universally interpreted as a disruption of the balance of power between Athens and Lakedaímôn or at any rate the fear of such a disruption on the part of the Lakedaimonians. On this standard view, the *aitíai kai diaphoraí* were not the cause, but merely the occasion for war. This is a misunderstanding. The Lakedaimonians react to the acute, existential threat to themselves that Athens, suddenly, indirectly, and

[153]de Ste. Croix (1972: 60).

[154]Salmon (1984: 262). When the Lakedaimonians and the Athenians end their war in 421, the Corinthians indeed enter into an alliance with Árgos, whose peace with the Lakedaimonians has expired. However, Árgos soon opts for an alliance with Athens, causing a rapprochement between Corinth and Lakedaímôn.

[155]Cf. Sordi (1991).

[156]Thukydídês 1.73ff., cf. infra Section 2.5.

unintentionally, but helped by its arrogance, turns into as an unforeseen consequence of the quarrel between Corinth and Kérkyra. To the extent that the Lakedaimonians had started worrying about the power of the Athenians before, that is secondary here and cannot be the famous 'truest cause'. The widely held idea that the Lakedaimonians, long since intent on war, were only waiting for a pretext or occasion is the result of trying to reconcile the antecedents of the war with the thesis that its underlying cause was a disruption of the balance of power.

That thesis springs from a misinterpretation (and indeed, in practically all the current translations, a misrendering) of part of a sentence in chapter 23 of Thukydídês' First Book. Everything else in Thukydídês' text contradicts it. Thukydídês leaves out no opportunity to contrast the hesitancy of the Lakedaimonians with the brashness of the Athenians. If anyone wants war in Thukydídês, it is not the Lakedaimonians, but the Corinthians on the one hand, Periklês of Athens on the other. On account of his popularity in the *ekklêsía* he is 'the most powerful man of his time', the Athens of his time 'a *dêmokratía* in name, rule by the first man in fact'.[157] It is Periklês who, after many lesser military ventures, at last leads the Athenians into the great, fateful confrontation with Lakedaímôn. In Thukydídês' words: 'The driving force of the citizenry, he opposed the Lakedaimonians in all things and would not permit any concessions, pushing instead for war.'[158]

Periklês is not 'chief executive', 'head of government', or anything of the sort: the Athenians do not have that. If he is influential, to the point of exercising 'rule [*archê*]', it is because he knows what the citizens want. His pushing for war presupposes an underlying pro-war attitude on the part of the Athenians. By contrast, neither Thukydídês, nor the actors concerned themselves, had much interest in the 'balance of power'. What, for Thukydídês, the 'truest cause of the war' really was will be examined in Section 2.5. This will build on a general analysis of the way thinkers of the period perceived the relations between autonomous actors and communities in Section 2.4. But readers particularly interested in Thukydídês may also turn to Section 2.5 immediately.

The fourth-century *pólis*-world: unmanageable conflict. What now befalls the Greek world is no longer the kind of short, local war typical of the pre-Persian era, but war that continues for years, indeed, with brief interruptions, for decades and which involves not just a few *póleis* at a time but a great many. The war begun in 431 continues for ten years (albeit mostly in the summer months only). It is followed by six years of shaky peace (at least between Athens and Lakedaímôn) and then another eleven years of war, ending with the crushing defeat of the Athenians in 404. Thukydídês considers the events of the years between 431 and 404 as essentially a single war, now commonly called the 'Peloponnesian War'. But the catastrophe of the Athenians is not the end of the matter: if Thukydídês treated it as such, it is simply because he was no longer around to record the sequel. The war flares up again in 395 and continues to 387. Still more turbulence lies ahead. Thus, the catastrophe of the Athenians of 404 is matched by that of the Lakedaimonians of 371. In the 350s, the Athenians quarrel with a number of other *póleis* with which they have allied themselves against the Lakedaimonians and again suffer defeat. It is only the establishment of a sort of protectorate over Greece by

[157] Thukydídês 1.127, 2.65.

[158] *ágôn tên politeían ênantioúto pánta tois Lakedaimoníois kai ouk eía hypeíkein, all'es ton pólemon hôrma.* Thukydídês 1.127.

Philip II of Macedon, from 338 onwards, that restores some measure of stability. But at the same time, it marks the beginning of a new era with some entirely new characteristics.

The indirect cause of this unending crisis of the *pólis*-world was the Persian threat. This made it necessary for the Greeks to forge alliances with many members that were far more formidable militarily than anything they had been used to. The direct cause was the discovery by the Athenians of what it was possible to do with a large fleet. Unfortunately, the problems posed by their attempt to uphold supralocal rule under the structural and cultural conditions of the *pólis*-world—conditions which historians have hitherto neglected almost completely—proved insoluble. But neither could the demon of supralocal power be put back into the bottle.

To vanquish the Athenians, the Lakedaimonians find themselves driven to employ the same means as the adversary. They build up a powerful fleet. But after their 404 victory, the Lakedaimonians cannot simply retreat from their newly won maritime dominance without creating a power vacuum in the Aegean, dangerous not least with regard to the continuing Persian presence in the east. I do not know whether, among the Lakedaimonians, retreat was considered: I am merely saying that even if this was so, retreat would hardly have been possible. There could be no return to the *status quo ante* of the pre-Persian *pólis*-world. The Lakedaimonians have to carry on where they forced the Athenians to leave off. Tellingly, they soon do so with the same dubious methods that the Athenians had resorted to. This suggests that those methods were not exclusively the result of human blindness, but dictated by perceived necessities—or put differently, by intrinsic weakness of the dominant power.

The heavy hand of the Lakedaimonians in turn engenders a reaction: Athenians, Corinthians, Thebans, and others unite against them (leading to the war of 395–87). Nor does the Persian Great King sit idly by. He gives the Lakedaimonians money for their fleet in return for their permission to re-establish his suzerainty over the Greeks of Asia Minor after the defeat of Athens. But when the Lakedaimonians go back on that (unpopular) concession, the king helps bring about the coalition against the Lakedaimonians and gives it financial support. From 377, the Athenians manage once more to create a league under their leadership, protesting that they will not repeat past mistakes and mistreat their new allies. Whatever such reassurances might be worth, from the point of view of those allies the new league had this great advantage that the risk of new encroachments by the Athenians was hypothetical, while the encroachments of the Lakedaimonians were real.

In 371, the Thebans win the great victory of Leúktra over the Lakedaimonians, who never in their history had suffered a similar reverse. Their old nightmare comes true: helped by the Thebans, the Messenians, hitherto heilots, secede from Lakedaímôn, roughly halving its territory. But the dominion of the Thebans over their allies quickly breeds resentment in its turn, and is overthrown after only a few years. Meanwhile, the collapse of Lakedaímôn creates problems for the Athenians: their allies, for whom the point of the new league was to counter the Lakedaimonians, get unruly. Given the scarcity of the sources, interpreted very differently by historians, the details are hard to reconstruct, but growing tension eventually leads to war, between Athens on the one hand and its main allies on the other, from 357 to 355. De facto, that is the end of the second Aegean league.

The underlying cause of all this turbulence is, I believe, the peculiar construction of society in the *pólis*-world that we discussed earlier. Made up of fiercely autarchic units that rejected the concept of rule in principle, favouring cooperative organization instead,

this society offered little to base supralocal rule on, and inversely contained much to make it difficult. To be sure, rule could be established if sufficient military resources were available. But unlike the Roman empire (whose superior construction we shall examine shortly), the kind of rule that the Athenians introduced to the *pólis*-world tended to crumble the moment the imperial power looked the other way. There was no 'cage', no common infrastructure or other forms of functional interdependence to keep the subjects together and which the imperial power could exploit. In such conditions, rule was either accepted voluntarily, an acceptance which, as we shall see, Rome excelled at bringing about; or it ended up overstretching the resources of the imperial power in a vicious spiral of defection and punishment.

The Greeks of the *pólis*-world saw no advantage in supralocal rule. They had always lived without it in the past, and they had fought the Persian empire to prevent it. Now that it was being exercised by the Athenians (and later, others), they did not see how it benefited anyone except, perhaps, the imperial power. It has been argued that the Athenian *archḗ* brought economic advantage: a unified coinage as well as unified weights and measures supposedly helped trade, and the Athenian fleet kept pirates at bay. But it is not obvious that a common coinage has any bearing on trade. Latin christendom was much more commercially active than the *pólis*-world: after the turn of the second millennium, trade became much more important economically, socially, and politically than it had ever been in the pre-christian era; this was despite the fact that coinage in Latin christendom was always extremely varied. The reason why the Athenians unified the coinage as well as the weights and measures within their empire was not to promote economic expansion, but to make it easier to collect tribute. It is possible of course that there was a positive economic effect. But it would not have visibly or primarily benefited the citizens, who did not see trade as the basis of their livelihood, or if they did were not proud of the fact and unlikely to be politically influential. The evidence for unification of the coinage is, incidentally, fragmentary—literally so. We only know of the Athenian decision to ban non-Athenian coins in the *archḗ* from a fragmentary inscription that is impossible to date precisely. The decision was probably taken late in the fifth century; as to how effectively it was implemented, and for how long, we have no idea. As for protection from pirates, that was a public good from which, as 'free riders', individual local communities would still benefit even if they seceded from the empire—which they kept trying.[159]

Not the least factor impeding efforts to maintain the empire, and pushing those efforts into a self-defeatingly harsh direction, was the strongly felt illegitimacy of coercive rule in the *pólis*-world. Thukydídês, an Athenian himself, has various speakers explicitly call the Athenian *archḗ* a *tyrannís*, including not only some from Athens but none other than Periklḗs himself. The Corinthians, in a call for war against Athens that Thukydídês assigns to them, not only employ the same word, but call those subject to Athenian rule *dedoulṓmenoi*, 'people who have been made slaves'. The Mytilenians, in Thukydídês, address an appeal to the Lakedaimonians that accuses the Athenians of the 'enslavement', *doúlôsis*, of the members of the Aegean league.[160] 'When a free man who, by force, has been subjected to rule understandably secedes to regain his independence, and we subdue

[159] On the alleged advantages of the *archḗ*, see e.g. Dahlheim (1994*a*: 175). On the unification of the coinage cf. Finley (1999: 168–9).

[160] Thukydídês 2.63, 1.124, 3.10.

him, we think that we must punish him severely,' Thukydídês has a certain Diódotos remark in the *ekklêsía* when the Mytilenians rebel against Athens. What is striking is the word *eikótôs*, 'understandably, naturally'.[161] Diódotos' opponent in this debate as recreated by Thukydídês is Kléôn, whose portrayal by Thukydídês untypically expresses naked dislike on the historian's part. Elsewhere, in another departure from his habit of veiling his opinion, Thukydídês declares in his own, authorial voice that rebellious Náxos, compelled militarily to reverse its secession from the Aegean league, was the first of the league members to be 'enslaved, contrary to the [league] statutes [*pará to katesthêkós edoulṓthê*]', with the others following later. In other words, Thukydídês explicitly endorses the view of some of his protagonists that the *archḗ* amounted to slavery.[162]

Conversely, nothing that Thukydídês has the Athenians offer in self-justification can have endeared them to their contemporaries. If he is any guide to this, his fellow citizens' propaganda was abysmal. In the speech, already alluded to, before the citizens' assembly at Spártê (the one that prompts a large majority of that assembly to vote for war against Athens), the delegates of the Athenians argue, in essence, that (*a*) our empire is our reward for having served Hellás against the Persians—fifty years before; (*b*) it is founded on the right of the stronger; (*c*) you Lakedaimonians in our place would behave no better than we do. The Athenians, in support of their stance, invoke human nature, and this is usually interpreted as sober, 'realist' insight. It is equally possible to interpret it as facile self-indulgence—quite apart from being foolishly undiplomatic and counterproductive, since if the Athenian envoys really said this the Lakedaimonians could hardly fail to feel insulted.[163]

Thukydídês shows this attitude of the Athenians at its most extreme in the famous dialogue with the people of Mḗlos, a small island *pólis* in the Aegean that had managed to keep its neutrality during the war of 432–21. But in 415 (without pressing reason, at least none that Thukydídês tells us about), the Athenians deliver an ultimatum: submit to us, or else. In their words (really Thukydídês', of course): 'We wish to leave you in no doubt that what we want is to rule [*árxai*] you without trouble to ourselves, sparing you to our mutual benefit.' The Melians ask: 'And how would we benefit from being your slaves [*douleúsai*] . . . ?' The Athenians reply: 'Because you would get the chance to submit before suffering a terrible fate, whereas we would gain from not destroying you'—since, evidently, dead Melians would not pay tribute.[164] That is all. If the Athenians had had any positive ideology, any notion, even pretended, that their dominion was in the interest also of their subjects, Thukydídês no doubt would not have suppressed it. The ethos of the Athenians is that of the mafia. That it was possible to run an empire differently was to be shown by the Romans.

A mentality that perceived rule as immoral in principle led those exercising it—like the Athenians—to adopt that perception as their self-image and live up to the role of immoral bastards expected of them. In such circumstances, the attempt to maintain supralocal rule in the *pólis*-world was akin to trying to control a bag of fleas. Certainly this was true in the absence of really overwhelming power, and even the Athenians did not in fact have that. Not least, precisely, for want of military resources, the empire that

[161] Thukydídês 3.46.
[162] Thukydídês 1.98.
[163] Thukydídês 1.73–8.
[164] Thukydídês 5.91–3.

they established from the 470s onwards was an empire built on the cheap—quite small, nonetheless unstable, and short-lived.

Just because they were more powerful than anyone else in the *pólis*-world (with the possible exception only of Lakedaímôn), did not mean that the Athenians were powerful enough to manage an empire. We should remember that the one they came to possess was not the result of conquest, but rather of a sort of putsch—it did not grow over time, allowing them to learn from their mistakes before moving on to further expansion, but fell to them suddenly, and having already pretty much reached its greatest extent. That extent was not impressive in comparison with the vast provinces of the Persians or Romans, and even so was only possible as a maritime empire. Only islands and coastal areas isolated from each other by sea lanes could be controlled by a fleet—which required a great deal of capital investment but less manpower than would have been needed to control a landlocked territory of similar extent and, perhaps more importantly, similar proclivity to resist the imperial power. Once the fleet had been brought into being, it was much easier to pressure the allies-turned-subjects into paying for it than it would have been to get them to provide serviceable troops (they did provide troops, but as we shall see later on, in the Sicilian campaign of 415–13 those troops deserted when the situation became critical for the Athenians). A hidden disadvantage of this maritime empire was that although it had proved fairly simple to establish, it was always squarely based on coercion, with the consequence that surveillance, which also cost resources, could never be relaxed.

The tribute exacted by the imperial power could not be used to buy troops the way it could be used to buy ships. Hired troops and the *pólis* did not mix well—in large numbers, mercenaries were dangerous to a system of collective rule in a way the oarsmen on the triremes were not. To be sure, the intensification of warfare in the *pólis*-world from the fifth century onwards led to an increase in the use of mercenaries. But for the citizens to stay in control, they could not allow themselves to be outnumbered. Moreover, the expenses of the *pólis* were not financed from taxes so much as from (more or less) voluntary contributions of the rich. If the rich had been made paymasters of troops, it would have made them that much more powerful—promoting oligarchy or indeed tyranny, a trend indeed observable in the fourth century (when rule by strong men made a come-back in some places after having long been practically extinct).[165]

So supralocal rule by a *pólis* was intrinsically weak, despite the bluster of the Athenians. To compensate this weakness, it was tempting to resort to intransigence and intimidation—the more so if there were other factors siphoning one's resources, such as the continual warfare not just within one's empire (against one's own subjects) but also against actors outside it that during the century or so after 431 never stopped for long. Warfare became more disinhibited. Even from the period preceding the outbreak of the great war of 431, Thukydídês reports practices in intra-Greek warfare that indicate increasing brutality (cf. Section 2.5 of this chapter). No doubt this was a consequence of the much greater resources that, originally because of the Persian threat, were now mobilized. After 431, atrocities became more frequent. The unprovoked massacre of the people of Mêlos in 415 is the best known only because of Thukydídês' famous dialogue. In the fourth century, the endless warring, likewise accompanied by atrocities, was perceived as a disease, as Plátôn says. Many, like Plátôn, considered its cause to be the weakened

[165] Schulz (1999: 287).

sense of belonging to the greater Greek community. This prompted a pan-Hellenic reaction.[166]

The striving for dominion or empire (*archê*, as opposed to *hêgemonía*) was now frequently condemned as a root cause of the problem.[167] A treatise on the constitution of Athens attributed to Aristotle refers to the fifth century as that period in the history of Athens 'when, under the influence of the demagogues, the *pólis* made the most mistakes'.[168] Isokrátês in his *Panêgyrikós*, which dates from the late 380s, had still, in principle, defended the fifth-century Athenian *archê*. Thirty years later, he had become much more critical. In the *Areopagitikós* (*c.*357), he advocates constitutional reform to create a counterweight to the omnipotence of the *ekklêsía*. His speech *On the peace* of 355 sharply attacks the populism of Athenian politics: 'I know that it is hazardous [*prósantés estin*] to oppose your [the citizens'] views, and that although we have *dêmokratía*, we do not have freedom of speech [*parrhêsía*], except here [in the citizens' assembly] for utter fools who care nothing for your welfare, and in the theatre for satirical playwrights.'[169] Written under the impact of the war of 357–5 between Athens and its main allies, the speech calls for a complete rejection of maritime dominion (*hê archê hê katá thálattan*), which according to Isokrátês was the cause of all the evil that the Athenians had brought on themselves and on other Greeks. 'We covet dominion which is neither just, nor capable of being attained, nor advantageous to ourselves.'[170] Isokrátês, too, likens maritime dominion to tyranny.[171] Being in his early 80s, Isokrátês invokes the licence of old age to justify the audacity of his speech, which he emphasizes. In fact he was not alone with his opinion. Many rich citizens, who in wartime were obliged by law to spend a lot of money for military purposes, had enough of the frequent belligerence. Subsequently, one of them, Eúbulos, successfully introduced legislation that made the decision to go to war more difficult.[172]

A key slogan of the period was *koinê eirênê*, common or general peace.[173] By this was meant a general pacification, enshrined in a treaty, of most of the *pólis*-world (excluding Sicily and southern Italy) and which was to guarantee the 'freedom and independence' (*eleuthería kai autonomía*) of each individual *pólis*. Such a *koinê eirênê* was indeed proclaimed repeatedly. However, leading actors instrumentalized it for their own purposes. This is true of the very first such endeavour, the 'king's peace' of 387, so called because it was brought about by the intervention of the Persian Great King Artaxérxês (Artachshassa) II. The Great King played the Greeks against each other: threatened by the Lakedaimonians in Asia Minor, he engineered a coalition of other Greeks against them, then switched sides and forced the enemies of the Lakedaimonians to accept a peace advantageous to the latter as well as to himself, but presented as a settlement for all Greeks. By, in principle, protecting the freedom of each individual *pólis*,

[166] *sursaut panhéllénique*, de Romilly (1968: 217); cf. Bringmann (1965: 20ff. and passim). According to de Romilly, the late 5th cent. saw the 'breakdown of the old rules' and brought a crisis of inter-*pólis* warfare (1968: 215–16). On 4th-cent. atrocities, see Volkmann (1990: 14–17).

[167] Perlmann (1991).

[168] Aristotle (?), *Athênaíôn politeía* 41.

[169] Isokrátês, *On the Peace* 14 (my trans., with borrowings from Isokrátês 1928–45: ii 15).

[170] Isokrátês, *On the Peace* 64–6 (the quotation is from section 66—Isokrátês 1928–45: ii 49; modified).

[171] Isokrátês, *On the Peace* 115.

[172] Carlier (1990: 67–75).

[173] Jehne (1992, 1994); Ryder (1965).

the treaty, repeatedly renewed, obviated supralocal rule that could become dangerous to himself. However, the principle of independence for every *pólis* was subordinated to the interests of the Great King—whose suzerainty over the Greeks of Asia Minor and Kýpros was acknowledged—and of the Lakedaimonians, who, thanks to their entente with the Great King, retained a free hand to secure their own domination of the *pólis*-world.

Regardless of its, at best, partial implementation, the very popularity of the concept of *koinḗ eirḗnē* is testimony to the coalescence of the *pólis*-world, once so fiercely particularist, on account of its now inescapable strategic interdependence. Actors now had to pay attention to all other major actors across the Greek world, not just to the neighbours. The concept of *koinḗ eirḗnē* acknowledged that from now on peace and stability would be established in the *pólis*-world on a supralocal basis, or not at all. But the *pólis*-world proved incapable of regaining stability by itself. The peace of Corinth of 338 marks the beginning of a new era, characterized by supralocal rule exercised by Greek-speaking kings.

2.2.2 The Greek world in the post-Persian era

2.2.2.1 *The rise of supralocal kingship*

Militarily, the Greeks of the fourth century enjoyed a reputation that transcended the *pólis*-world. For example, crack troops of the Persian magnates were frequently made up of Greek mercenaries. Clearly, not a few Greeks thought it paradoxical that their people as a whole did not make more of its military prowess. In the words of Isokrátēs, that reliable mouthpiece for trends in Greek opinion:

> We [Greeks] merely have to send over a stronger force than [that of the Great King]—it would be easy for us if we had but the will—to exploit all Asia free of risk. How much nobler to make war on him over his kingdom, than to quarrel over leadership [*hēgemonía*] among ourselves![174]

Aristotle, too, expresses his conviction that the race (*génos*) of the Greeks was 'capable of ruling over all others, if it could but be brought together in a single citizen body [*politeía*]'.[175] But as long as, in terms of political organization, the *pólis* dominated the scene all by itself, the Greek world was fated to remain too fissiparous to project power over the rest of the world.

As mentioned, the intensification of warfare that followed the appearance of the Persian threat led to more and more mercenaries being employed. This was one reason why, by the fourth century, warfare had become more professional, and also more innovative. Thus, the phalanx of the Macedonians was equipped with very long pikes wielded by the first few ranks, to decimate the adversary and break up his phalanx before he was able to get close enough for hand-to-hand combat. There was experimentation with new battle formations, like the rhombus or the wedge, or the 'lopsided' phalanx, of whose two wings one, destined for attack, had greater depth than the other. This kind of thing presupposed training, drill, which for the conventional citizens' armies with their part-time warriors was difficult. There was also more emphasis now on the more mobile peltasts (distinguished from hoplites by their lighter shield, called *péltē*) as well as on archers and cavalry—in the more thinly settled areas of middle and northern Greece that

[174] Isokrátēs, *Panēgyrikós* 166.
[175] Aristotle, *Politiká* 1327*b*.

now became increasingly important, breeding horses was easier than in the core areas of the *pólis*-world, situated further south.

Among the beneficiaries of this military change was the ruler of one of the minor principalities on the periphery of the Greek world. Unlike a citizens' collective, a king was not threatened by a standing army, even of mercenaries, on the contrary. Philip II, king (from 359 to 336) of the Macedonians, a fairly large, more or less Hellenized, but probably not Greek-speaking people, united the Macedonians under himself (against several competing pretenders), then extended his influence to Thrace and more and more of the Greek *póleis* there as well as to the south, and at last defeated the Athenians. The peace of Corinth of 338 made him the ruler of Greece in the sense that no one could counteract him any longer. This was another 'general peace' (*koinḗ eirḗnē*) of the kind discussed, emphasizing the independence of the participating *póleis*. However, Philip united them in a confederation (without the Lakedaimonians, who for the time being continued their opposition), of which he was the *stratêgós autokrátôr* or 'commander with full powers'. He was about to lead them against the Great King when he was assassinated. The Persian campaign was thus undertaken by his successor Alexander III.[176]

The active contribution of the *pólis*-world to that campaign was quite moderate. Of perhaps some 37,000 men that Alexander led against the Persian empire, perhaps a third were Greek. Most were Macedonians or came from other semi-Hellenized Balkan peoples like the Thracians.[177] But it was the stabilization of the *pólis*-world that enabled the Macedonians to focus on the Great King. The idea of entrusting such a campaign to the king of the Macedonians was not new. In his *Panêgyrikós* of the late 380s, Isokrátês had seen the Athenians in this role, and in 356 he had addressed an appeal to king Archídamos III of Lakedaímôn to manage the hoped-for Persian campaign. But already in 346 (when he himself was 90 years old), he wrote a long epistle to king Philip to persuade him to adopt the project and unite the Greek world as a preliminary. He repeated this call in two further letters to the king, the first probably dating from 342, the second from 338, after the defeat of the Athenians by Philip.

The optimism of people like Aristagóras of Mílêtos or Isokrátês turned out to be justified: that it was enough simply to capture the royal palace in Súsa, hit the centre of power (Aristagóras), simply to field the bigger army (Isokrátês). The Persian empire was no single political community, united by mutual solidarity of its members, but a mosaic of distinct lordships and commonwealths, kept together, at once loosely and efficiently, by a fairly small administrative and military apparatus. To maintain the suzerainty of the Great King, it was enough to prevent the rise of internal or external rivals. Conversely, once a serious competitor did appear, such as Alexander, there was cause for alarm. The military apparatus could be knocked out in just a few decisive battles. In 331, Alexander seized the treasure of the Great King in Súsa and had the royal palace in Persépolis set on fire. That was sufficient to put the empire and its various component parts at his disposal.

[176] On the controversy over the language of the Macedonians, of which, given the lack of any surviving textual material, we know next to nothing, see Borza (1990: 90–7). The Greeks of the period considered the Macedonians a separate, uncivilized people. However, the Argead royal house was, in the 5th and 4th cent., resolutely hellenophile, tracing its descent to Hêraklês and winning for itself admission to the Olympic Games, which otherwise at that time remained closed to the Macedonians. Greek was also, from an early stage, the language of the court.

[177] Walbank (1992: 31).

The invaders failed to keep this empire together. The plural lordships of the 'successors' (*diádochoi*) of Alexander that, following his death in 323, came to replace the rule of the Great King were the hard-won product of decades of warfare between his commanders. For the most part they had participated in the original Persian campaign, when, like Alexander himself, they had still been very young; unlike Alexander, they mostly lived long (and consistently belligerent) lives. When they had finally left the scene, things calmed down a little, at least by comparison. Nevertheless, it would be hardly appropriate to speak of peaceful coexistence or mutual recognition of the new rulers. From one generation to the next, those rulers remained faithful to their original role as military leaders. It was the foundation of what legitimacy they had, success in warfare being a sign that the gods favoured them.[178] If they adopted the title *basileús* (king), it was because of their military prowess—with both the Argeads of Macedon and the Persian Achaimenids (Hachamanishiya) extinct, none of the new rulers had any hereditary, dynastic claim to kingship. But military prowess is not something that one possesses once and for all; it has regularly to be demonstrated afresh.

> If royal status could be acquired by an individual from scratch, the example could be imitated by others, and where exactly did the process stop? One way to interpret the political history of the period after 306 [when two of the *diádochoi* first adopted the title *basileús*] is to see it as a struggle by those who had achieved royal status, partly to hold on to that status . . . and partly to keep the membership of what one might call the 'royal club' as restricted as possible. There was never any lack of potential candidates, inside and outside the existing royal dynasties. Hence the pressure on kings to be and to remain successful military figures, and to be seen as such.[179]

As a result, the relations among the many greater and smaller potentates of the Hellenized eastern Mediterranean region in the third and second centuries are characterized by recurrent warfare complemented by often bloody intra-dynastic intrigue. There was a certain consolidation in the sense that three larger empires came to dominate the scene durably, that of the Antigonids centred on Macedon, that of the Seleukids centred on Syría, and that of the Ptolemies centred on Egypt. There were many more actors besides—local dynasts, *pólis* tyrants, confederations of *póleis* (especially in Greece proper) and, still, individual *póleis*.

The activities of individual commanders often display a marked adventurism—of which Alexander himself was the shining example. His talent as a military leader is beyond question, but at the same time his success was highly contingent. One of the factors working in his favour was that he had the opportunity to fight for the Persian empire as a whole. It was as easy to win by a few great battles as a smaller empire would have been. In fact it was easier, since there was no one to challenge the conqueror over the booty. Later contenders never again had the chance to fight over so great a prize, and unlike Alexander, who had no serious competitor, they had to keep glancing back over their shoulder at each other. There no longer was an empire as big as the Persian empire had been, but many powerful rivals who, with fewer provinces, were hardly less formidable militarily than the Great King. For example, a military leader like Pýrrhos, king of the Molossians, may well have been the equal of Alexander in terms of strategic

[178] Lévêque (1968).
[179] Austin (1986: 457).

talent. But for all his victories he failed in his endeavour to fashion a western empire from the lands of the Greeks in southern Italy and Sicily, the Carthaginians in Sicily and northern Africa, the Romans and other Italians: unlike the Persian empire, those western lands had no single ruler, and trying to conquer them lured Pýrrhos into a quagmire. Already his predecessor Alexander, namesake and contemporary of the Macedonian king, had made a similar experience. Others, too, failed like the two Molossians. Some were lucky. Thus, out of the Seleukid possessions in Asia Minor a local grandee, Áttalos, carved a respectable kingdom around his capital Pérgamon (at the time, the plural Pérgama was more common; Bergama in present-day Turkey). He adopted the title 'king' in the 230s. In the post-Persian period, personal ambition by military leaders was a main cause of military activity and political change.

2.2.2.2 *Rule and society in the post-Persian Greek world*

More important, for society as a whole, than the personal fate of military leaders was the fact that their expansionist rivalry helped promote a remarkably homogeneous Greek-style civilization in the entire eastern Mediterranean region. True, many of the new potentates were Macedonians and proud of it. But as they spoke Greek and, like the Argeads before them, espoused and supported Greek culture, they were agents of Hellenization. For simplicity's sake, they will all be called 'Greek' in what follows.

In the new post-Persian world, plural great lordships on the one hand corresponded to a society fairly unified in terms of (at least vehicular) language and (at least elite) culture on the other hand. This was the more true as the lordships themselves did not represent any sort of political community. Unlike the *pólis*, some *pólis* confederations, and later the Roman empire, they had no citizenship of their own. They even lacked official names: instead, one spoke of the 'affairs' (*prágmata*) of the king.[180] This makes clear that they were not conceived as commonwealths, nor as territorial, but as primarily, indeed almost exclusively, personal. In the wars of the 'successors', actors claimed the title 'king' when they had no territory at all, at least none that was at all clearly defined, but did have troops: Antígonos Monóphthalmos ('the One-Eyed') and his son Dêmḗtrios Poliorkêtḗs ('the Besieger of Cities'). Indeed, those two were the first to adopt the royal title after Alexander. Even later, when the dynasties of the 'successors' had each durably acquired a core territory of their own, the personal character of their kingship was much more obvious than its territorial or ethnic character (an ethnic element existed only in the case of the Antigonids in Macedon). 'Although initially divorced from any specific territorial setting, and thus mobile and fluid, the monarchies acquired a sedentary character. But the contrast with the Age of the Successors should not be pushed too far.'[181]

As we saw, in the *póleis* all land (*chṓra*) belonged to the *polítai*, the citizens. In the realms of the post-Persian Greek rulers (with the possible exception of Macedon proper), the land belonged to the king, making it 'royal land', *basilikḗ chṓra*. This was by right of conquest: it was 'land won by the spear', *chṓra doríktêtos*. However, not all land was royal land, or the epithet would have been redundant. The post-Persian realms could not have functioned without the autonomous Greek *póleis*, which relayed the influence of the king while dispensing him from local administration. Where there were too few *póleis*,

[180] Meyer (1976: 130); for examples from inscriptions, see Orth (1977: 49) and Ma (2002: document 24 line 34, document 31 B4 line 10).

[181] Austin (1986: 456).

therefore, the new rulers founded them, especially the Seleukids in Asia. But the new *póleis* operated exactly like the old, meaning that the citizens owned the land, not the king. The king could give land (his land) away to endow sanctuaries, or military settlers (often, though not invariably, of Greek or Macedonian origin). The king could also sell his land. If he made a gift of land to a private person, it was regularly on the condition that the new owner attach it to the *chôra* of a *pólis*.[182]

A further way of organizing the Greek or Hellenized elite within and also outside the *póleis* was through the *gymnásia*. Originally concerned only with physical exercise, in the post-Persian period they acquired a wider responsibility for education, thereby transmitting Greek culture. Non-Greeks remained excluded. Outside the *póleis* they operated as autonomous corporations, often privileged by the rulers like the *póleis* themselves. The *gymnásia* thus played an important role in Egypt. Unlike the Seleukids in Asia, the Ptolemies as the new rulers of Egypt had no need for *póleis*: they could build on the highly developed central administration inherited from pharaonic times, and possible because the population, concentrated along the Nile valley, depended on artificial irrigation. Egypt proper had only three Greek cities, of which the most important, the royal capital Alexándreia, was run not as a citizens' cooperative but by a royal governor. Greek and Macedonian settlers flocked to the country in large numbers, but not to found cities. They were employed in the army and granted land in the countryside.[183]

Owing to the fragmentary nature of the sources, it is hard to reconstruct in detail how post-Persian Greek kingship really worked. The literature tends to assume that the new rulers presided over a strong central administration and that the small amount of certain knowledge about it at our disposal is just a glimpse of a greater whole. As even one of the latest and most sophisticated efforts to peer through the fog, by John Ma, finds, 'the material often does not directly attest, but seems to imply a sophisticated and extensive apparatus' of 'state-power'.[184] Personally, despite the brilliant analysis offered by Ma, I am less impressed by what the material 'seems to imply' than by what it clearly does not. Ma has compiled an 'epigraphical dossier' of over fifty documents contained in inscriptions. They show that the political discourse of the period refers almost exclusively to rulers as people, in particular specifying honours for them and people of their entourage, and recording the bestowal by the rulers of favours and privileges. By contrast, practically never do such documents allude to institutional aspects of post-Persian kingship. Besides honours, the other big topic is dues payable by the subjects. But even in this context we hear next to nothing about the administrative structures involved.

People in the service of the king and clearly of great importance curiously lack titles comparable to those attached to *pólis* offices and which appear constantly. The inscriptions are full of 'prytans', 'gymnasiarchs', 'agonothetes', and so on, whereas royal officials invariably have job titles that sound improvised and lack colour: *ho epí tôn*

[182] For evidence of the latter—evidence which I think reflects a general pattern, although this need not mean that there were no exceptions—see Orth (1977: 56–8). Ma (2002: 158–9) conjectures (with others) that there were *póleis* actually forming part of the *basilikḗ chôra* ('It thus seems . . . '). If this were confirmed, it would undermine the interpretation proposed here. Ma concedes that it is 'yet unclear' how co-ownership of land by both the king and the citizens would have worked in legal and political terms.

[183] Jones (1971: ch. 11).

[184] Ma (2002: 107).

pragmátôn kathestaménos, 'he who is put in charge of affairs',[185] or *tetagménos hypó tom* [*sic*] *basiléa* plus the name of the king, 'he who is put under king so-and-so'.[186] The documents date from around 200 BCE, when the post-Persian Greek realms had been in existence for a century or so. If they had really been as administratively active and developed as Ma seems inclined to believe, they would thus have had time to produce specialized vocabulary reflecting that fact. The terminological poverty of post-Persian Greek kingship contrasts strongly with the multitude of court offices and titles (often picturesque or even poetic) that we find later in the extremely centralized, Greek-speaking east Roman empire.[187] The difference, I suspect, is that whereas in the late east Roman empire the central administration was truly important, and the court deliberately showcased, under the post-Persian rulers they retained a relatively low profile except in Egypt proper. I believe that this was because the post-Persian rulers wanted it that way. For whereas in the late east Roman empire the court was the only centre of power, post-Persian Greek kingship at least ostensibly shared power with the *póleis*.

Outside Egypt, the central administration of the new realms may have been limited to but a few supralocal tasks, in particular the collecting of dues, the supervising of the royal monopolies, and the organizing of the military. By contrast, there was no central legislation and no central control of the economy (monopolies apart). Clearly, the separate realms were not conceived as closed or integrated economic circuits. Thus, the monetary system was much the same throughout the eastern Mediterranean region. There were many mints, but they mostly used the same monetary units, in particular those based on the Athenian *dráchma*. The main (not the only) exception is, once more, the Egypt of the Ptolemies. Here, a separate currency was introduced in the third century to serve as the exclusive legal tender in the Nile valley, the only region where the regime was administratively in a position to control this.

The *póleis* paid annual dues (*phóroi*, *syntáxeis*) to the king. Furthermore, the king might claim certain types of revenue of individual *póleis* for himself, such as customs and harbour fees. This was handled differently in all the individual *póleis*, and the object of negotiations between them and the king rather than something that the king simply imposed. At the initiative of one or the other side, the existing arrangements were frequently modified. Dues might at any time be raised, lowered, newly introduced, or abolished. Revenue from the *póleis* was mostly in the form of money, whereas revenue from the *basilikḗ chṓra* was often in kind. The king no doubt had need of the produce in question for his troops, but also sold some of it off. The inhabitants of the *basilikḗ chṓra*, about whose status (pending the discovery of new inscriptions) we currently know almost nothing, were hardly slaves *ipso facto*, even if we know of a case where the king sold land explicitly including the population. But a private owner would not have kept back the population, either, just as in today's world one can sell real estate that is currently rented out. It seems difficult to determine whether the dues paid by the population of the *basilikḗ chṓra* should be regarded as rent or tax, or whether the king should be regarded as landlord or political master.

Apart from collecting dues, the economic activities of the central administration consisted mainly in supervising the royal monopolies—for example, for salt, olive oil,

[185] Ma (2002: e.g. document 9 lines 7–8), cf. ibid. p. 126.
[186] Ma (2002: document p. 376 lines 3–4); also ibid. p. 378.
[187] Cf. e.g. Whittow (1996: 106–13).

or (in Egypt) papyrus. The actual local operation of such monopolies was apparently subcontracted to lessees. One of those farmed-out monopolies may have been the right of coinage: the *póleis* perhaps obtained the right to mint their own coins for a fee payable to the king. This may also be the background to the special currency of Egypt. There were almost no *póleis* there and, thus, no one who would have paid for the right of coinage, and deposits of precious metals are scarce in Egyptian soil. The compulsory exchange of non-Egyptian coins—for a fee, needless to say—could be exploited by the royal administration as a kind of ersatz mine.[188]

Formally, the king did not give orders to the *póleis*, but expressed requests, suggestions, displeasure. In practice, it seems not to have made much difference if the king had explicitly granted a given town independence (referred to as *autonomía*, *eleuthería*, or indeed *dêmokratía*, in the sense of rule by the inhabitants as opposed to rule by the king), as was often the case, or not. On Seleukid territory—or perhaps one should say, surrounded by it—there were also more or less independent local principalities, or autonomous sanctuaries with jurisdiction over the people living close to it (the Jewish temple at Jerusalem is one example of this). The real power of the rulers must have varied a lot, depending on period and place. Even the power of the Egyptian Ptolemies was not everywhere effective. During the entire history of the dynasty, it was contested in parts of Egypt, or even in abeyance.[189]

Rulers lavished wealth on cities, not just royal residences like Alexándreia or Pérgamon, but others as well. As in the Persian period, largesse was an important element of royal self-presentation and legitimation. Significantly, rulers did not limit their largesse to within their own realms, but spread it throughout the Greek world, manifesting its cultural unity as well as the fact that this, rather than just their subjects, was the public which rulers sought to impress. A documentation of gifts by rulers of the period between 359 and 30 BCE lists 318 donations for which the evidence is secure—that figure being an indeterminate fraction of the total, owing to the contingent and fragmentary nature of the extant data and rigorous selection criteria of the editors. The gifts came from a multitude of greater and lesser dynasts. Among the recipients, the most favoured were Dḗlos (77), Athens (40), Rhodes (28), Mílêtos/Dídyma (23), and Delphoí (12)—Dḗlos, Dídyma, and Delphoí all being major Panhellenic sanctuaries of Apóllôn. The nature of the gifts ranges from great edifices to other monuments (in particular statues) to gifts in kind (like grain or timber) to money. *póleis* did not hesitate practically to demand such gifts; conversely, the donors might exhort the recipients to behave in certain ways if they wished to be considered again in the future. In every case, inscriptions made sure that the donors (and their injunctions) did not fall into oblivion.[190]

Inscriptions recording the correspondence of rulers or resolutions passed by the citizens of the *póleis* are one of the main sources of our knowledge of the period. It appears from such records that in their official correspondence the post-Persian Greek rulers avoided the term *archḗ* 'rule, dominion'. In letters from the Seleukid king Antíochos I (in power 281–61), we find instead the expression *chôra te kai symmachía*, '(our) land and alliance', where 'land' may be the royal land, the private property of the king, and the 'alliance' is what links the king and the nominally autonomous *póleis*; elsewhere we

[188] Pekáry (1976: 47). Ma does not mention any royal exploitation of the right of coinage, merely pointing out (Ma 2002: 163 n. 200) that the coinage of the post-Persian *póleis* needs further research.

[189] Pekáry (1976: 73); Samuel (1993: 176).

[190] Bringmann and von Steuben (1995); Ma (2002: 179–82, 203–4).

read *hê hêmetéra symmachía*, 'our alliance', the implicit 'we' bracketing the king on the one hand and the *póleis* on the other. In this context, it is interesting to note that we do occasionally hear of troops under the authority of individual *póleis*—in other words, though he was undoubtedly dominant militarily, the king did not have sole command over the military forces within his sphere of influence, or command over all such forces.[191]

An instructive example of royal discourse is furnished by two letters from king Philip V of Macedon to the citizens of Lárisa in Thessaly. In the first, of 219 BCE, the king declares that it has been pointed out to him that Lárisa had too few citizens. 'I judge therefore that you should vote [*krínô hymás psêphísasthai*] to give citizenship to those Thessalians living amongst you.' The second letter, dating from 214, refers to the same matter.

> I have been informed [*pynthánomai*] that those who, following my letter and your vote [*psêphisma*], had been enrolled as citizens . . . have been deleted again from the list. If that is the case, those taking counsel with you have strayed both from what benefits your city and from my decision [*êstochêkeisan hoi synbouleúsantes hymín kai tou sympheróntos têi patrídi kai tês emês kríseôs*]. For none of you, I think, would contest that it is best of all for the *pólis* to draw strength from as many participants in the commonwealth [*metéchontes tou politeúmatos*] as possible, and for the land [*chóra*] not to lie fallow as, scandalously, it does now . . . Once again, then, I now call on you [*parakalô*] to approach the matter free of ambition [*aphilotímôs*] and to restore to the citizenship [*politeía*] those who have been chosen by the citizens. If, however, any have committed impardonable offences with regard to the kingship [*basileía*] or the *pólis*, or are on some other ground unworthy of inclusion in this list, I call on you to defer their case [*perí toútôn hypérthesis poiêsasthai*] until I myself am back from the army and able to hold a hearing [*héôs an egô epistrépsas apó tês strateías diakoúsô*], and to warn those who intend to turn them down [*katêgoreín*] not to create the impression that they act from ambition [*diá philotimían*].[192]

The king must have been annoyed by the behaviour of the citizens. Nevertheless, he does not condemn anyone directly—the reference to 'those taking counsel with you' seems intent on saving everybody's face, both his own and the citizens'. Philip reasons with the citizens, advertising the merits of his 'decision'. The part of the letter that I have here omitted (together with the greeting at the beginning and the dating formula at the end) points out, with a great deal of justification, that a liberal attitude towards the enrolment of new citizens was behind the power of the Romans and their expansion—a subject to which we shall return presently. Yet even in the second letter, the king does not give an order, but voices a polite request. Moreover, Philip seems to be making a concession: whereas the first letter had called for 'all Thessalians living amongst you' to be admitted to the citizenship, this is not repeated in the second letter, where instead the citizens are implicitly permitted to screen candidates and given the opportunity to tell the king why they want some of them excluded.

What is the meaning of the repeated warning to the citizens not to act from 'ambition'? It seems plausible that the royal 'decision' caused a split among the citizens, and populist agitation by those opposed to it—why else would the measure have been

[191] Orth (1977: 58–60). Orth argues that the word *symmachía* does not designate a formal alliance, but a friendly relationship. Ma (2002: 158), along with others, interprets the formulation '*póleis* in *chóra* and *symmachía*' as meaning that some *póleis* were part of the *basilikê chóra*. For evidence of troops under the authority of individual *póleis*, see Ma (2002: 151).

[192] *Inscriptiones graecae* IX.ii.517.

first adopted and then, shortly afterwards, rescinded? The king indicates that the *chôra* of Lárisa was partly not even in cultivation, a measure, presumably, of the jealousy with which the monopoly of the (existing) citizens on landownership was defended, and of the reluctance to share it with outsiders as requested by Philip. Furthermore, the expression 'those taking counsel with you' seems deliberately ambiguous. It could be taken to refer to outside advisers, but also to some faction among the citizens themselves. Semantically, the former is the more natural interpretation, yet one fails to see why non-citizens would have been consulted on such an issue. The king seems to be choosing his words carefully, rebuking the 'wrong' faction among the citizens without explicitly acknowledging its existence—which might have exacerbated the split.

Note also that there is no hint of any administrative apparatus at the disposal of the king. The letter is ostensibly written by him personally, not merely on his behalf. He alone is mentioned on his side of the affair, and the phrasing suggests that he personally will hear the citizens' complaints against those they deem unworthy of inclusion in their midst: *héôs egṓ . . . diakoúsô*, 'until I myself may hear or interview', with the personal pronoun *egṓ* 'I' being used for emphasis only (grammatically it is redundant).

Remarkably, but entirely typically, the king never invokes any kind of suzerainty or 'sovereignty' for himself, or a duty of the citizens to obey. He is clearly exercising power, but he is doing it by negotiation, and prepared to compromise rather than coerce. He had quite enough on his plate as it was. As the second of his two letters also shows, he was worried about the strength of the Romans. When, in 216 at Cannae, they suffered a devastating defeat, Philip seized the opportunity and entered into an alliance with their adversary, Hannibal. The result was not what he had hoped. Hannibal did not in the end get the better of the Romans, and Philip was unable to exploit their weakness. The Romans in turn entered into an alliance with the Aitolians, a confederation of *póleis* bordering on Thessaly, who neutralized Philip militarily. This may go some way to explain why the second letter is somewhat more conciliatory than the first. It is also conceivable that the disenrolment of the new citizens at Lárisa was prompted by the war between Philip and the Aitolians and the distraction this provided. Nevertheless, following the second letter, Philip again got what he wanted, at least for the time being: on the slab on which the letters are inscribed, they are followed by a resolution to (re-)enroll the new citizens as desired by the king, complete with a list of their names.

Opinions in the literature differ greatly on the status of the *póleis* in the post-Persian realms. Alfred Heuss has emphasized their independence, whereas Wolfgang Orth, against Heuss, has underlined their subjection: according to Orth, Heuss was duped by the discourse of the inscriptions, with their insistence on the freedom and self-determination of the *póleis*, into overlooking the reality of their oppression by the king. Both Heuss and Orth are vulnerable to the charge of having bent their interpretation of the sources into line with their general thesis. Seeking a median position, John Ma accords the official discourse of the period as contained in the epigraphic sources a high importance in line with the theory of 'speech acts' proposed by J. L. Austin. For Ma, rather than just disguising the 'real' politics, such official discourse is itself part of politics.

However, Ma shows himself more impressed by the 'state-power' (as he routinely and unselfconsciously calls it) of the post-Persian realms, in particular the Seleukid one, than in my view is really justified by the sources. That does not prevent Ma, without discussing the contradiction, from stressing the 'statehood' also of the *póleis*, regardless of their formal status as 'subject' or 'allied'. Ma himself points out that our understanding

of Seleukid kingship (his main focus) is hampered by unsolved problems, such as the phenomenon of virtually independent dynasts on Seleukid territory, or more generally the question of how uniform the influence of the rulers was within their territory. Inscriptions testify to this influence; but, of course, an absence of inscriptions does not authorize the conclusion that the king had no influence in a given place, since they may be lacking for any of a number of reasons.

Even where inscriptions exist, they provide selective information. The *póleis* might not have commemorated in stone correspondence with rulers that embarrassed them (though one is sometimes astonished by what *was* so commemorated), so the inscriptions that we do have might paint too harmonious a picture of their relations with the rulers. We can read between the lines, as I just attempted in the case of the two letters to the citizens of Lárisa, but of course there is an element of risk to that. On the other hand, even if the picture is inexact, what the political actors involved wanted it to look like is actually as significant as the reality that it may hide. For, as Ma rightly emphasizes, the ideology of post-Persian Greek kingship had a political importance of its own, being itself a major ingredient of royal power.[193]

Ma offers an explanation for the seemingly unsystematic profusion of special privileges and favours that the king granted to individual *póleis* and which in practice do not appear to have made that much difference in their treatment: 'Negotiated statuses and the gradation of privileges acted as a system exercising repressive tolerance: concessions strengthened the framework, by creating a dialogue based on the assumption of the ruling power's legitimacy and by making it seem benevolent.' On the other hand, this game of rewards also acted as a constraint on the 'ruling power's' freedom of manoeuvre: it put pressure on the king to conciliate the *póleis* and not to jeopardize his reputation for benevolence.[194]

How one assesses the relationship between post-Persian rulers and the *póleis* is partly a question of how one extrapolates from the lacunary information available. Yet over this debate one should not lose sight of the 'bottom line', that on which everybody is in agreement, albeit tacitly—since that 'bottom line' is astonishing enough and significant for our understanding of the period. Even assuming that the official discourse with its notion of autonomous *póleis* was all pretence and propaganda, it would still be remarkable that this propaganda never even attempted to suggest the existence of a unified, centralized, and legally homogeneous political entity. There is no invocation at all of any 'public' office being filled by the king, no suggestion that he is in command and that subjects (an expression that never appears) have a duty to obey.

The post-Persian Greek rulers mattered economically, as agents of redistribution, and militarily as agents of political change. From both aspects their role was a questionable one. The extraction of wealth and its concentration in royal hands made possible impressive royal patronage, but hardly brought about an allocation of factors that was particularly beneficial from the point of view of society as a whole. The economic activities of the rulers aimed at enriching them, rather than being carried out at least ostensibly in the 'public' interest. Rulers acted as entrepreneurs or simply as exploiters, not as guardians of the public welfare. It could be objected that throughout history rulers have

[193] Heuss (1937); Orth (1977); Ma (2002) ('statehood' of the *póleis* pp. 150–1; local dynasts, uniformity or otherwise of royal power pp. 174–8; significance and interpretation of the inscriptions pp. 235–7).

[194] Ma (2002: 171, cf. 238–9).

often disregarded the public interest. But the rulers of more recent 'western' experience, those of Latin christendom and the *ancien régime*, insisted strongly on their public role and on their responsibility towards their subjects (and vice versa). Greek rulers did not. Conversely, and again unlike those later rulers, they were not loved. They might be feared, admired, respected, but not revered, as 'the crown' in christian Europe very much was. No one would have missed them, and in the end, no one did.

Militarily, the post-Persian rulers acted as guardians of the dominance of the new Greek-speaking elite throughout the eastern Mediterranean region. But this is relativized by the observation that even the non-Greek rulers who, from the late third century, took over more and more of the Seleukid provinces, in particular the Parthians, continued to promote Greek culture. To a considerable extent, they displayed the same 'auto-Hellenization' already found earlier in places like Macedon itself. The 'constructive' element of protection afforded by the Greek rulers is further relativized by the fact that rulers 'played' with their military might, indeed were obliged to do so: without the occasional war the king would scarcely have been seen to be doing anything at all. Besides cultural patronage and in particular building activities, war was the chief means of giving rulers visibility. Yet, at the same time, they were not always capable of ensuring peace within their sphere of influence—war between *póleis* as well as civil war within them might still occur.[195]

2.2.3 *Imperium Romanum*

While the eastern Mediterranean basin underwent cultural unification under Greek auspices, further west the Roman empire was beginning to unfold. The clashes with Carthage may be regarded as elimination contests for hegemony in the western Mediterranean region. Yet even before they were definitively decided in favour of Rome, that city was already engaged in conflict with the westernmost of the great Greek monarchies—the First Macedonian War (215–205) against Philip V, the king who wrote the letters to Lárisa, runs parallel with the Second Punic War against Hannibal (218–201). This was the beginning of the process of destruction of the post-Persian system of plural Greek lordships, and of the gradual absorption of this system into the Roman sphere of influence. The fundamental cause of this seemingly astounding development is the inherent weakness and social dysfunctionality, or at best superfluity, of those Greek lordships, and conversely the much more robust construction of the Roman empire, which was much better at mobilizing resources in its favour and, moreover, at benefiting those whom it brought under its control. The suppression of the Antigonid kingship of Macedon in 168, the demise of the Seleukid kingship in 64, and finally the end of the Ptolemaic dynasty in Egypt in 30 BCE, in each case as a result of Roman intervention, are milestones of the displacement of a weak form of supralocal political organization by a superior one.

2.2.3.1 Auctum Romanum nomen communione iuris*: the rise and expansion of the Roman legal order*

It may have been geography that put Rome on its course towards universal dominion. Latium (the part of Italy where it is situated, now Lazio) has a gentle landscape devoid

[195] Pekáry (1976: 72–3).

of marked natural barriers. Fertile, it supported numerous villages and towns that could not well keep their distance from each other the way the Greek *póleis* could, separated as they often were by sea lanes, high mountains, or barren terrain. Quite inevitably, in the long run, one of those towns came to control the rest. Helped no doubt by its central location at an easy crossing of the Tiber river, that role fell to Rome.[196]

Already before the end of the sixth century, it appears to have been the leader of the confederation of Latin towns, a position that it had to defend repeatedly but in the end retained ('Latin', *latinus*, being the adjective corresponding to the name of the land, Latium). After the so-called Latin War (340–38), the inhabitants of the defeated (!) Latin towns were made citizens of Rome—something that would have been unthinkable in the Greek world. Not least no doubt because of their traditionally close relations, the Romans did not treat the other Latins simply as subjects. Moreover, all Latins were equally threatened by those outside their borders—borders traced, but not protected, by mere hills. Against the Aequans, Celts, Etruscans, Sabines, Samnites, Umbrians, and Volscians beyond those hills, who all spoke different languages from theirs, solidarity was imperative. It found expression for example in joint colonies of the Latins, founded to protect the borders.

Citizenship was not as exclusive in Latium as in the Greek world. There were no metics. If a slave was set free, he received limited citizenship, his (male) descendants full citizenship. The Latins among themselves early on granted each other *conubium*, the right to intermarry—this meant that if parents originated from different towns, the children inherited the citizenship of the father—and *commercium*, the acceptance of a common law code governing business transactions: this meant that business partners could be taken to court even if they came from other towns than oneself. Both *conubium* and *commercium* were, separately or jointly, also later granted by the Romans to partners outside Latium.

Similar arrangements—in particular *epigamía*, the equivalent of *conubium*—were also found among confederated Greek *póleis*. Yet unlike the *póleis*, where only a few—Athens, Lakedaímôn, Thebes—even attempted this and where none was successful for more than a few decades, Rome began to rule other towns and peoples at an early date and from then on never ceased to expand its control. (To be sure, Lakedaímôn held conquered territory in the southern Peloponnese, in particular Messḗnê, for two centuries or more—but suffered utter failure within a generation when, after its 404 victory over Athens, it tried to extend its dominion further.) When Rome finally brought the entire Mediterranean basin under its control, the astonishing speed with which this expansion was completed as it were represented the last section of a quasi-exponential curve of growth. Before, expansion took place at a much slower rate, as it were gradually gathering pace, but even here what is striking is that the curve virtually never points downwards. Unlike the imperial *póleis*, who had empire thrust on them suddenly (Athens by hijacking the Aegean league, Lakedaímôn by vanquishing Athens, Thebes by vanquishing Lakedaímôn), Rome had started small and by the time it reached its zenith had centuries of practice of running an empire.

The Roman sphere of influence under the rule of the senate (what is now usually called the Roman 'republic') was constructed as a concentric system that also amounted to a hierarchy. This induced status consciousness in the various participants in the system,

[196] Sherwin-White (1973: 5–7).

which thereby was stabilized, and enabled Rome to use the granting of higher status as an instrument of rule.

The outermost segment of the system was made up of the *socii* or 'allies'. The treaties linking them with Rome were considered indissoluble. They obliged the allies to place themselves under Roman military command when asked to do so, and to renounce a foreign policy of their own. But the duty to provide troops was hardly onerous, because of the principle that the troops furnished by the allies must not make up more than half of the total Roman troops. Since the number of allies kept increasing, this meant that Rome itself (whose citizenry also grew, however) took on a disproportionate share of the burden, whereas the burden of individual allies was light. Rome neither exploited nor oppressed the allies: they did not pay tribute, and Rome ordinarily abstained from intervening in their internal affairs. Even though the allies had to accept the limitation of their autonomy and were sometimes treated condescendingly, the system also brought them advantages. In particular, they enjoyed efficient protection from attack: it was hard to threaten Rome, nor of course did the allies threaten each other.

Compared to the simple allies, communities with Latin citizenship were one step up on the status ladder. After the Latin War, most of the original Latin towns had Roman citizenship, Latin citizenship being granted from then on to newly founded colonies. The colonists were mostly recruited from among the Roman citizens, but gave up their Roman citizenship for the less highly regarded Latin citizenship in return for being assigned new land. Sometimes, allies, too, were allowed to join in the founding of new colonies. With regard to Rome, Latin citizenship bestowed *conubium* and *commercium*, the right to vote in the Roman citizens' assembly when visiting Rome, and the right to full Roman citizenship if one moved to the capital. That latter right apparently caused a drain on the colonies, said to have been counteracted in the second century BCE by the proviso that migrants could only claim Roman citizenship if they left an adult son behind. In addition, Roman citizenship was also acquired automatically by certain holders of annual municipal offices in communities with Latin citizenship, and by certain of their family members; in this case without any obligation to reside in Rome. As a result, the number of Roman citizens gradually increased throughout the Roman sphere of influence, and even though they remained a minority, they were usually members of the local elite. Much later (probably under Hadrian in the second century CE), an enhanced Latin citizenship was created, the so-called *Latium maius*. Under this scheme, Roman citizenship was acquired not only by holders of municipal office, but by all *decuriones*, that is members of the *curia* or municipal council.

The highest status was enjoyed by communities of Roman citizens (*municipia*), whose inhabitants enjoyed full citizenship or a restricted version, shorn of the right to vote in the citizens' assembly in Rome (*civitas sine suffragio*). At first, it was those communities situated close to Rome that were organized as *municipia*, in particular towns that the Romans had defeated and conquered and then incorporated in their own territory (*ager Romanus*), like the Latin towns opposing Rome in the Latin War of 340–38. *Municipia* not too distant from the capital obtained full citizenship, the rest the restricted version. But they could be upgraded to full citizenship, which seems eventually to have taken place throughout. The *municipia* were either autonomous, or supervised by officials sent them from Rome. They gradually spread throughout Italy, and, from the second century, beyond Italy, acting as spearheads of Romanization. However, Romanization was not enforced and perhaps not even intended. It was the prestige and example of Roman

social organization and culture that exerted an assimilating and homogenizing effect, gradually substituting a common Latin-speaking culture for the cultural and linguistic mosaic that went before.

Simplified like this, the picture perhaps seems more idyllic than it was. The attitude of communities or peoples not yet or not yet fully Romanized towards Rome was clearly often ambivalent. Rome, too, was ambivalent, sometimes generous, sometimes brutal. On the one hand, it was willing to let those who, voluntarily or under duress, accepted its tutelage participate in this tutelage and share in its benefits, to the point even of admission to full Roman citizenship. On the other hand, this was not pure philanthropy, but consciously conceived as a system of rule, of exercising control. Generous as the offer of participation in the *res Romana*, the Roman commonwealth, might be, refusing it carried risks of severe punishment.

This is well illustrated by the so-called 'social war' of 91–89, when indignation at the lack of regard of the Romans for their allies, in the context of the controversy over land reform then dominating Roman domestic politics, brought about a rebellion. The issue of whether and how to redistribute farm land in Italy to counter the impoverishment of many Roman farmers had been festering for decades and was a favourite topic of politicians who, by means of securing a strong position in the citizens' assembly, sought to overthrow the dominance of the senate and thus of the wealthy elite. Already in the 120s, Gaius Gracchus had planned to give Roman citizenship to the Latin colonies, and to the other allies the vote in the citizens' assembly when visiting Rome, thereby winning a large new clientèle there. A similar strategy was adopted by Livius Drusus, who in 91 planned to extend Roman citizenship to all Italian allies. His assassination triggered the rebellion. However, unlike what the expression 'social war' might lead one to think, only some of the *socii* took part—the Romans themselves spoke of the 'Marsic war', the Marsi being one of the peoples involved.

Faced with a dangerous situation, the senate went on the offensive, delivering a telling ultimatum to that majority of the allies that had not yet sided with the insurgents: accept full citizenship or, if you refuse, expect war without mercy. In other words, Roman citizenship was not merely offered but—and this is often overlooked—at the same time forced on the allies.[197] Those who accepted had to send troops forthwith, otherwise troops were sent against them. This move left those determined to fight Rome in a minority and militarily without a chance. Their rebellion was put down with great brutality. In this manner, the free inhabitants of Italy south of the Padus (Po) river became Roman citizens, their communities *municipia*. In terms of the numbers of its citizens, the Roman polity thus became incomparably larger than any of the *póleis* or other political communities of the Mediterranean basin. The phenomenon had struck observers well before reaching such dimensions. As early as 214, Philip V of Macedon told the recalcitrant citizens of Lárisa, with their typically Greek reflex to keep outsiders out or at least down, that they should also

> look at others who similarly resort to enrolling new citizens. Among them are the Romans, who, even when they set free one of their slaves, receive him into their commonwealth [*políteuma*] and add him to the existing citizens. And in this fashion they have not only enlarged their own city [*patrís*], but have sent out colonies to close on seventy locations.

[197] Dahlheim (1994*b*: 124).

Rome presided over a political construction which, in terms of demographic extent and resources of manpower at its disposal, quite simply had no competitors. The post-Persian Greek realms or the Carthaginian sphere of influence may have comprised a comparable population, but their internal cohesion was much weaker. The cohesion of the *imperium Romanum*, on the other hand, was further enhanced by the frequent warfare. The common army, made up of Roman and Latin citizens and the allied contingents, was a living symbol of the larger Roman community and its success (more often than not that army *was* successful) as well as bringing inhabitants from distant areas into contact with each other.

The system worked because, unlike in the *póleis*, citizen status did not automatically imply real political participation (as, in the *póleis*, it did at least for those with full citizenship)—even as citizen status was important in legal and, perhaps most importantly, in psychological terms. Every Roman citizen was a member of the citizens' assembly (except in the case of *civitas sine suffragio*). But real power in the commonwealth lay not there but in the senate with its 300 members (600 since about 80 BCE). All decisions required a majority in the senate, which also had exclusive control over how public money was spent. To be sure, it was the citizens' assembly (*comitia*) that annually elected the holders of the public offices (*magistratus*) and thus indirectly the members of the senate, which the officials competent to do so, the *censores*, replenished from former holders of those offices. Moreover, the assembly also passed new laws and voted on war or peace. But its members were not equal. On certain important matters, like the election of the two consuls—the supreme office-holders—the richer citizens were given greater weight, and owing to the absolute control of the *magistratus* over when to convoke the assembly, and over its agenda and proceedings, the dominance of the senatorial elite was secure. Admission to the senate was largely limited to members of established leading families. 'New men' (*homines novi*), whose ancestors had not already sat in the senate, were the exception. Certain socially inferior groups (like craftsmen) were excluded entirely.

As Moses Finley has emphasized and shown in detail,[198] in essence the Roman constitution was a clever combination of formal involvement by all and actual *rule* by an elite small enough for its members to be able to work things out among themselves. There are many similarities between the Roman political system and that of the *póleis*: the submission of all to fixed (though not immutable) impersonal law rather than personal power, the distribution of power among many by means of elective offices only held for a year, and whose incumbents were checked by each other as well as accountable to the community. Yet, unlike the *póleis*, the *res Romana* was not a cooperative: it was really a system of rule (though not, or only to a very limited extent, coercive rule).

The senators, or rather the senatorial families, had greater political and social dominance and greater cohesion than the elite of the *póleis*, a veritable *esprit de corps*. Their ethos was patriarchal and the attitude of the other citizens towards them was characterized more by reverence and less by detachment, indeed diffidence as in the Greek world (senators were addressed as *patres*, fathers). The system was not immune to serious internal struggles, but it was rarely called in question as such and the elite was never disempowered. Officially, the commonwealth was called SENATVS POPVLVSQVE ROMANVS, The Senate and People of Rome, illustrating how the senate, *before* the people, was seen as epitomizing, not just representing, the community. But on the other hand the people is explicitly named, too.

[198] Finley (1991: esp. 84–96).

An element of social organization lacking in the Greek world, but extremely important in Roman society, both in private everyday life and in public life, was patronage, the system of patron–client relations. Less high-ranking individuals (but also groups, for example villages or entire towns) committed themselves to a *patronus*, a higher-ranking, influential protector. In return for public deference (which bestowed prestige) and support notably in elections, the *patronus* would use his influence to advance the interests of the members of his *clientela*. If his *clientes* suffered encroachments from other powerful citizens, they could turn to him. Often he would also represent them in court. Patron–client relations were normally very stable, indeed they were often inherited on both sides. But that did not mean that the loyalty of the *clientela* was automatic. Less perhaps in the sense of trying to recruit new *clientes* than in the sense of making sure one held on to the existing ones, there was thus a certain competition for followers among members of the Roman elite. This must have helped to discourage behaviour likely to cost the elite popularity or at least respect with the mass of the people.[199]

The de facto separation of citizenship on the one hand and full access to political participation on the other made it possible to let the citizenry grow, whereas in the Greek system it had to remain small and localized. And because the Roman system, unlike the Greek, did not delegitimize rule, it was much easier to exercise supralocal control. As we saw, Aristotle posits that keeping the citizens free of rule was incompatible with their exercising rule over others.[200] In the Roman case, the fact that rule, albeit depersonalized and subject to strict constitutional limitations, remained possible made it much easier both to govern a geographically far-flung citizenry, and non-citizens as well. If citizens did not all have to be consulted on everything, they did not have to live close together and be able to meet regularly. Moreover, as Romans took for granted that rule should and could be responsible and in accordance with rational principles, rather than arbitrary and oppressive, it was natural for them to apply that kind of limited rule to non-citizens as well. That made their rule more acceptable than the ruthlessness that Athens or Lakedaímôn had quickly slithered into, not least because for them rule and tyranny were so close as to be almost the same thing.

Limited supralocal rule had also been practised by the rulers of the post-Persian Greek monarchies. Rule was, naturally, what rulers were expected to engage in, rather than regarded as something of an aberration as in the case of rule being exercised by *póleis*. And because their troops, however numerous, were no threat to the rulers themselves (I cannot think of any example of soldiers plotting, at their own initiative, against them), they could control, with less effort, far larger areas than could the *póleis*, whose organization was in its essence antithetical to rule. Because post-Persian royal rule was limited, moderate, it was more stable than that of the imperial *póleis*. But the reason it was limited was largely the relative weakness of the Greek rulers, who were dependent on the *póleis* for the financing and local administration of their realms (*póleis* like Athens, much as they were prepared to exploit their subject *póleis*, did not need them to function themselves, whereas a king without *póleis* deferring to him would not have been a king). Rome, by contrast, combined the ability to wield limited but effective rule with a much more powerful political organization than the Greek rulers presided over.

[199] On patron–client relations under the rule of the senate, see e.g. Bleicken (1995: 24–42).
[200] Aristotle, *Politiká* 1333*b* 29; cf. Isokrátês, *On the Peace* 115.

Roman rule was not just founded on military power, but was also a legal order and could expand as such. Reviewing the bestowal of Roman citizenship on existing or newly founded settlements, Velleius Paterculus (∼20 BCE to after 30) declares that 'the Roman name has grown great through shared law', *auctum Romanum nomen communione iuris*.[201] This legal order was not egalitarian. But—and this made it better suited as an instrument of rule—it offered the chance of 'promotion'. Roman rule was rule by an exclusive (though in itself un-egalitarian) group, the Roman citizenry, which, however, held out the promise of becoming part of it. It is probably no accident that the expansion of the Roman sphere of influence in Italy employed methods resembling patron–client relations among Roman citizens themselves. Rome acted as *patronus* of foreign communities, as a protector possessed of higher rank and superior authority, but not normally as an oppressor and exploiter. By fair treatment and the bestowal of privileges, the Romans tended to secure the adherence not just of their voluntary allies, but even of defeated adversaries.

The strength of the Romans lay in the organization of their sphere of influence described above. In a process feeding on itself, the military superiority resulting from good organization and management in turn encouraged further expansion by war. William Harris has documented impressively how bellicose the ethos of Roman society was. Holders of public office were expected to distinguish themselves in at least one military campaign.[202] Under the rule of the senate, hardly a year went by without war, provoked, if necessary, by ambitious office-holders. External actors in their turn either sought protection from Rome or, provoked by the rise of Rome, sought to counteract it—like Carthage, or some of the *póleis* in southern Italy, who called Pýrrhos, king of the Molossians, to their help. Rome lost battles—against Pýrrhos, no less than all of them—but, owing to the loyalty of its allies and the possibility thus afforded of raising ever more troops, never lost a war. 'Another victory over the Romans and we are finished,' as Pýrrhos is said to have said.[203]

The military superiority of the post-Persian Greek rulers was based on the size of their mercenary troops, which enabled them to control larger areas than the *póleis* and exact more tribute. This in turn paid for their many soldiers. But Rome was a new phenomenon again. It employed levies, not mercenaries (only once all other powerful actors in the Mediterranean basin had been eliminated, under Augustus, did it switch to a professional standing army). Under the rule of the senate, initially the soldiers equipped themselves and received no payment; later, they were paid a small stipend. They were thus no great drain on Roman financial resources (at first pretty much nonexistent). Those citizens—ordinarily, the great majority—who, in a given year, were not mobilized for the army contributed to it financially. According to the historian Livy, this arrangement was introduced concurrently with the stipend in the late fifth century. Afterwards the stipend was slowly increased, and more and more equipment provided by the community.[204] In this fashion, the cost of military operations increased in tandem

[201] Velleius Paterculus 1.14.

[202] Harris (1979: ch. 1).

[203] Plutarch, *Moralia* 184*c*. Pýrrhos fought three great battles against the Romans. The Romans later came to believe that they had been victorious at the last of them, at Beneventum, after which Pýrrhos withdrew from Italy, but in reality he seems to have held his own at Beneventum, too.

[204] Livy, e.g. 4.60, 5.10. Cf. Bleicken (1995: 153–4), but see also ibid. p. 136: according to this, the taxes imposed on the citizens were not high (one, two, or three *per mille* of their property), were only

with the financial resources to meet it. However rich their employers, the mercenaries employed by the Carthaginians and the Greek rulers could not be multiplied endlessly. By contrast, the Romans, only rarely and temporarily outnumbered on the battlefield, did have a virtually unlimited supply of soldiers. In terms of manpower, the troops of the Carthaginians were at no point a match for the Romans.[205] As to the Greek rulers, they never threatened Rome at all.

After his famous crossing of the Alps (218 BCE), Hannibal succeeded, in several spectacular showdowns, not just to defeat the Romans but to inflict enormous casualties on them. In order at last to crush him, numerically if all else failed, the Romans nevertheless went on, at Cannae in 216, to field a giant army of almost 90,000 men—the largest battlefield line-up in western military history to that date;[206] only to lose much of it to the tactical genius of their opponent once more. No matter. Crucially, and contrary to what Hannibal no doubt expected, the disaster of Cannae failed to cause a major secession movement among the allies of the Romans: the system described earlier creaked and groaned, bits and pieces snapped (some communities going over to Hannibal), but on the whole it held: most allies remained loyal. At Cannae, eight legions had been fighting, more than in any previous war and each with a quarter more soldiers than usual. Nonetheless, in 214 the senate, in an all-out effort, was able to raise the strength of the army to a spectacular *eighteen* legions, amounting to a total of over 200,000 men including the allies, but (as in the other figure) not including the troops deployed against the Carthaginians in Spain, or the crews of the fleet.[207] In 211, nineteen legions operated in Italy (now clearly avoiding big showdowns *à la* Cannae, their purpose being to deny Hannibal any secure control of the territory), and four in Spain.[208]

Hannibal was eventually defeated in 201, despite his alliance with Philip V of Macedon, who had made peace with the Romans already in 205. At the insistence of various minor Greek actors, the senate, albeit hesitantly, again deployed troops against Philip as early as 200. Philip was claimed by his opponents to have entered into an alliance with the Seleukid king Antíochos with a view to partitioning the Ptolemaic dominions between them at the expense of the then boy king of Egypt. Defeated in 197, Philip agreed to pay an indemnity and to renounce all claims to Greece, which the Romans formally declared free. Supported by Philip, the Romans went on to vanquish Antíochos as well—though he had previously been highly successful in his attempt to regain the eastern provinces formerly under Seleukid rule, earning fame as the new Alexander.[209]

By then, the *imperium Romanum* (a term which, at that time, designates the Roman sphere of influence in its entirety, allies included) was growing almost in the manner of a snowball. To endanger it now would have required concerted action on the part of all

imposed in time of shortage of funds, and in part paid back later. After 167 BCE, they were abolished altogether, since taxes were now imposed on the population of the provinces. By contrast, Livy gives the impression of regular taxation. But he wrote centuries later and may have been thinking of the more institutionalized taxation in the provinces of his own time.

[205] Bleicken (1995: 157).

[206] Livy 22.36; cf. Lancel (1995: 170).

[207] Lancel (1995: 200).

[208] Lancel (1995: 236).

[209] Reliable information about the rumoured alliance between Philip and Antíochos is lacking. For an overview over both the sources and their controversial interpretation, see Ma (2002: 74–6).

or at least the majority of the allies (or, increasingly, the inhabitants of the provinces), a wholly unlikely event. Even if they had wanted to, the allies could not undo their treaties of alliance—valid in perpetuity—without incurring the enmity of the very power to whose superiority they contributed, or if not they, then their likes. It is possible to regard the Roman empire as the mirror image, as it were, of a system of collective security. The notion of collective security, which was supposed to have been put into practice in the twentieth century by the League of Nations and the United Nations Organization, is plausible on paper, but lack of solidarity among the participants has so far prevented it from becoming effective. Conversely, as long as the interests of the allies or subjects were given but minimal consideration, it was virtually inconceivable that Rome should have been threatened by a simultaneous uprising of those under its command. Indeed nothing even remotely resembling such a situation ever came to pass. It was not secessionism that, centuries later, eventually caused the near-ruin and partial collapse of the empire, on the contrary: nobody wanted out, too many wanted in.

But we shall return to the problem of why the empire at last partly disintegrated in the next chapter. Here, we are still concerned with how it developed in the first place. Unlike what Kenneth Waltz has posited in his famous *Theory of International Politics*,[210] actors faced with the Roman challenge showed no balancing behaviour: they did not seek the alliance of lesser actors to create a counterweight to Rome as the dominant power. On the contrary, they often displayed the bandwagoning behaviour that according to Waltz will not occur in such a situation: rather than counteract Roman power, they sought its protection even at the price of submission. One would have expected the rulers of the Greek realms to join forces against the rise of Rome. They never did, but did join forces with Rome against their 'colleagues'.

Actors not only submitted to Rome voluntarily, but occasionally even went to the length of willing their own extinction in favour of Rome. Perhaps the most spectacular and best-known such case is that of the last ruler of Pérgamon, who left his kingdom to Rome on his death in 133 BCE. He may have copied the idea from an Egyptian prince, later to become Ptolemy VIII, who in 154 named Rome as heir to the land of Kyrénê. In this instance the point apparently was to prevent his elder brother, who at that time sat on the Egyptian throne, from murdering him; having succeeded to that throne himself, Ptolemy withdrew his will.[211] But a later prince of Kyrénê again left that land to Rome, which came into possession on his death in 96 BCE, and in 88 or 87 BCE, Ptolemy X even left Egypt to Rome. That will however did not take effect, because Ptolemy X was deposed before his death and Rome abstained from pressing its claim.[212] Again, in 74 BCE Bithynía was inherited by Rome on the death of its last king. A similarly 'soft' understanding of autonomy is manifested by the fact that the numerous local dynasts who owed their power to Rome (like king Herod in Palestine) were apparently far from considering this as belittling or as a departure from the norm. Their appellation as *socius* or *amicus populi Romani* (or, later *Caesaris*—i.e. ally/friend of the people of Rome/of Caesar) seems to have been perceived not as a euphemism for vassalage, but as a real badge of honour.[213]

[210] Waltz (1979: ch. 6).
[211] Samuel (1993: 177).
[212] Harris (1979: 155–8).
[213] Braund (1988*b*).

Following the suppression of the Macedonian kingship in 168 BCE, Roman predominance in the entire Mediterranean region was so obvious that the remaining independent actors, including the Seleukid rulers and the Ptolemies, on the whole adopted a deferent attitude towards Rome, often taking the initiative in requesting its help. Rome itself, on the other hand, was often reluctant to increase its commitments in the Greek-speaking east. The extension of direct Roman control to that part of the world was, in part, the result not of deliberate expansionism, but of Rome being 'sucked in' in order to avoid chaos. Thus, the Seleukid monarchy came to an end for reasons largely to do with the dynasty itself, its power sapped by continual intrigues of its members against each other and quarrels over the throne. At last only Syría itself remained under Seleukid rule, and even that was annexed in 83 BCE by the king of Armenía, Tigránês. When the Roman general Lucullus defeated Tigránês in 69, a Seleukid, Antíochos XIII, once more mounted the throne of his ancestors, with Lucullus' approval. But he failed to gain much influence, not least because his right to the throne was promptly contested by various relatives (the new king being the youngest of five sons of Antíochos X, they were numerous). Lawlessness reigned in Syría, and when, in 64, Pompey took over the command from Lucullus, he deposed Antíochos and instead of his kingdom created the province of Syría. The new Roman authorities gradually succeeded in re-establishing order.

Similarly, internal squabbles were largely responsible for the transformation of the rule of the Ptolemies into what can only be described as a farce. Ptolemy VIII we encountered already as prince of Kyrênê. Having succeeded in not being murdered by his elder brother, he sat on the Egpytian throne from 161 to 145, married both to his elder brother's widow, Kleopátra II, and to her daughter from that first marriage, Kleopátra III. Unfortunately, this *ménage à trois* was not very harmonious: for a while the three were literally at war with each other. The kingdom owed its continued existence to Roman patronage. Thus, king Ptolemy XII—chased from power, an exile in Rome, then restored by Roman intervention—in his will appointed his son Ptolemy XIII (born 61 BCE) and his daughter Kleopátra VII (born 69) to succeed him; married to each other, the two were to share the throne, but were expressly placed by the will (deposed both in Alexándreia and in Rome) under the protection of the Roman people. No sooner, however, had Ptolemy XII died (in 51) than Rome lapsed into civil war, as, simultaneously, did Egypt: in the former case, the contest was between Pompey and Caesar, in the latter, between Ptolemy XIII and his sister Kleopátra. Forced to leave Alexándreia, Kleopátra withdrew to Upper Egypt. Meanwhile, Pompey, defeated by Caesar, sought refuge in Alexándreia: he had been instrumental both in restoring Ptolemy XII and in having Ptolemy XIII (but not Kleopátra) recognized by the Roman senate, assembled by him at Thessaloníkê. Yet Ptolemy XIII had him murdered forthwith—to please the winner, Caesar.

Considering himself the executor of the will of Ptolemy XII, Caesar nonetheless obliged Ptolemy XIII to re-admit his sister to the throne. Predictably, that soon resulted in fresh turmoil, and led to Ptolemy being killed in battle. Since it was felt that a woman should not reign alone, Kleopátra thereupon married a younger brother (born 59), who joined her on the throne as Ptolemy XIV. Eager for the ultimate alliance with Rome, a dynastic union, she would have married Caesar. He already had a Roman wife, but Kleopátra bore him a child anyway—officially called Ptolemaíos Kaísar (Ptolemy Caesar), but known as Kaisaríôn ('Little Caesar'). Mother and son joined Caesar in Rome in 46; as Caesar had no other male issue, Kleopátra must have hoped that Kaisaríôn would

one day rule not only Egypt, but Rome. Yet although Caesar acknowledged Kaisaríôn as his son, he did not recognize him as his heir; instead, when Caesar was murdered in 44, his will revealed that he had adopted his great-nephew Octavian as his son and heir. Kleopátra quickly returned to Egypt, where, soon after, Ptolemy XIV was dead, too, allegedly poisoned by his sister and (officially) wife. She may not have wanted potential offspring from that union, or other offspring of her brother, to stand in the way of the succession of little Kaisaríôn at least in Egypt—indeed she promptly made him co-regent as Ptolemy XV.

She was not, however, opposed to producing more offsprings herself, if a male with the right specifications—meaning that he must be Roman and powerful—could be found: her prolonged affair with Mark Antony resulted in the birth of three more children. Unhappily for her, Antony was defeated by Octavian (or Augustus, as he later called himself), in 31 BCE. This caused Kleopátra to commit suicide lest she be brought to Rome as a prisoner, and Octavian to have Kaisaríôn killed lest this real—as opposed to merely adopted—son of Caesar become a focal point for opposition to himself. Allegedly, Kleopátra did not kill herself until after she had failed to seduce Octavian. Her children with Antony were brought to Rome. We know nothing about what then happened to the two older ones, both male; the youngest, a daughter, was later married by Octavian-Augustus to the king of Numidia. With the Ptolemies thus gone, Egypt was placed under direct Roman rule.

The ever-growing territory under Roman control could no longer be run as an 'informal' empire. Instead, more and more of it (like Syría or Egypt after the demise of the local kingship) was divided up into administrative units called *provinciae*. As a consequence of the victorious struggle with Carthage, Rome took over the Carthaginian sphere of influence wholesale, albeit in two instalments—after the First Punic War (242) Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica, after the Second Punic War (201) Spain. So much territory gained *en bloc* could not be organized in the traditional way, by means of a network of bilateral treaties with individual local communities. Its workability established, provincial organization was gradually extended to the rest of the empire, a process completed only in the early second century CE. Provincial administration did not replace the existing local structures, but merely overarched them: rather than direct rule, its purpose was the supervision of local self-rule, and the collection of taxes. Unlike the old allies, the population of the provinces was taxed. (Conversely, the taxation of Roman citizens, light as it was, was abolished in 167 BCE. Reintroduced in 43 BCE, it was replaced not long afterwards, under Augustus, by a 5 per cent inheritance tax, which remained in force until at least the third century.)

A similar game of rewards was played with the population of the provinces as with the allies and colonies of old: the promise and occasional bestowal of higher status or other privileges cemented the loyalty of the subjects. Individuals and groups in the provinces might seek Latin or indeed Roman citizenship or, having gained the latter, might strive to rise from the status of ordinary citizen to equestrian or even senatorial status. Individuals with Roman citizenship in the provinces formed local associations (*conventus civium Romanorum*). This demonstration of their exclusiveness must have goaded others into seeking the same status, though it could also generate a hostile reaction—illustrated most spectacularly in the anti-Roman pogroms instigated in Asia Minor in 88 BCE by king Mithradátês of Póntos. The possibility of tax exemption (*ius Italicum*, so called because no tax was collected on Italian soil after 167 BCE) also beckoned.

2.2.3.2 *The road to monocracy*

The growing acceptance of Roman rule was also owed to the demise of the old political system of rule by the senate, much lamented by the Roman elite itself. In proportion as the empire expanded, the cohesion of the Roman citizenry lessened. It, too, expanded and became more and more a merely 'imagined' community, to employ the term coined by Benedict Anderson to describe today's 'nation'. But unlike a present-day nation state, the 'people of Rome' displayed organic cohesion, based on functional interdependence of its members, at best in Rome itself, not elsewhere. The mutual solidarity of those holding Roman citizenship with each other was also undermined by increasing discrepancies of wealth and outlook. For much of the period of rule by the senate, the standard of living of the entire community was quite modest. An average Roman citizen was a small farmer, with between 2.5 and 7.5 hectares of land. That was enough to ensure self-sufficiency in almost all respects. Practically everybody practised small-scale agriculture, traders and craftsmen had little importance, and few people were noticeably wealthy.[214]

Yet, in the course of its expansion, Rome absorbed more and more foreign riches, which were distributed unequally. Many citizens sank into relative or indeed absolute poverty, losing ownership of their land to become tenants, or losing the land altogether, while the upper class amassed property, mainly of course in the form precisely of land. The *lex Claudia* of 218 hastened this process. In order to safeguard the agrarian character of the elite, it barred members of the senatorial class from commercial activities other than the sale of the produce of its land, thereby further encouraging those concerned to invest in landownership and to force less wealthy citizens off their land if they still owned it. At the same time, the big landowners were less and less dependent on the solidarity of their fellow citizens. They were thus able to devote themselves to power struggles against each other. Here, those in control over troops and provinces had the advantage. In the impoverished, even landless mass of the citizens they found a big reservoir of potential followers. The loyalty of the soldiers to their commander was cemented by the promise of new land, to be allotted to them at the end of their period of service. As a result, this service was more and more to individual leaders rather than the community as a whole. The last phase of the rule of the senate, from the late second century onwards, was marked by the rivalries of warlords like Marius, Sulla, Crassus, Pompey, Caesar, and Antony. The ultimate beneficiary, quite un-soldierly himself but politically adroit, was Octavian, who concentrated all power in his own hands and called himself Augustus, 'The August One'.

Augustus and his successors are now habitually referred to as the Roman 'emperors'. Yet, originally, the regime had none of the attributes now associated with 'emperors' or more broadly with the traditional monarchy of the European *ancien régime*. The system set up by Augustus was anything but traditional, and was not at all suffused by the quasi-sacred mystique of *ancien régime* kingship. It was a 'monarchy' only in the literal sense that there was but one person at the top. Unless one is prepared to extend the term monarchy to the kind of rule exercised in the twentieth century for example by Latin American dictators (with which the reign of Augustus and his successors has more in common than with what we think of as kingship), it is preferable to give it some other name. I propose 'monocracy', to express the fact that this was rule by a single supreme leader.

[214] Bleicken (1995: 18).

The terminology of the contemporaries was vague. Augustus and his successors avoided any association with the old Roman kingship, overthrown, according to legend, in the sixth century to make way for rule by the senate. As that latter system was held to embody the glory of Rome, paradoxically Augustus pretended to be re-establishing the rule of the senate after the period of troubles. The old constitutional forms, ceremoniously enacted, were now a mere façade. Yet they did have the effect of making it difficult to invent new terminology designating a new political reality that officially did not exist. Augustus could not invent a new office or title for himself and resorted to improvised expedients. Thus, he and his successors were referred to as *princeps*, First Man (adapting an expression that until then had normally been used in the plural to refer to the leading men in the senate), as *caesar* (really a family name, Julius Caesar having adopted Octavian as his son), by the new (but archaic-sounding) honorific *augustus*, or as *imperator*, commander.

The ingrained Roman prejudice against kingship precluded calling the supreme power-holder king even in colloquial Latin discourse. Not so in Greek, where since the fall of Persian rule kingship had become widely familiar once more. In official Greek discourse the supreme power-holder in Rome is ordinarily referred to as *autokrátôr*. Short, perhaps, for *stratêgós autokrátôr*, 'commander with full powers', this title corresponds to the Latin *imperator*, 'commander'. The Latin *augustus* was originally rendered into Greek as *sebastós* ('he who is to be revered'). Unlike *autokrátôr*, which remained in use until the fifteenth century, *sebastós* at some point ceased to be applied to the supreme power-holder—in the later (east) Roman empire it designated a court rank below that of *autokrátôr*. Probably for the same reason, until 1450 (when the last of them died) the 'empress' was given the Latinate title *augoústa* rather than *sebastḗ*. However, though this usage did not become official until the seventh century, in everyday Greek the supreme power-holder in the empire was simply called 'king' as early as the first century;[215] though *kaísar* (= *caesar*) is also often found.[216]

The new political situation made possible a more extensive recourse to techniques of rule that had proved successful before, in particular the bestowal of Roman citizenship. In the context of the old order, where nothing could be done against the will of the senate majority, it could hardly have been practised to the extent that Augustus and his successors did. The last census under the old order, of 69 BCE, put the total number of citizens at 910,000. Augustus in his *Res gestae*, his own account of his political achievements, gives 4,063,000 citizens for 28 BCE and 4,937,000 for 14 CE. Those figures were prominently displayed: the text of the *Res gestae* was inscribed, in both Latin and Greek, not only on the mausoleum that Augustus built for himself in Rome, but in public places in the provinces as well. With a view to impressing the population of the provinces, no doubt the Roman authorities were keen to emphasize the increase of the number of citizens. The figures given by Augustus may in fact be exaggerated. On the other hand, even if they are correct, they would mean that towards the end of his reign Roman citizens were still very much a minority among the fifty-plus million inhabitants of the empire.[217]

[215] 1 Peter 2.17.
[216] Matthew 22.21, Acts 25.11–12.
[217] Augustus, *Res gestae* 8; cf. Dahlheim (1994*b*: 66).

In fact, Augustus and his immediate successors still tread somewhat carefully in this matter. But Claudius (in power 41–54) resolutely used large-scale conferral of citizenship to help consolidate the still-expanding empire. It is under Claudius that we first find the practice of giving citizenship to soldiers of the so-called auxiliary troops (*auxilia*) upon completion of the requisite twenty-five years of service, as well as to their descendants. The Roman legions themselves were theoretically reserved for those holding citizenship, but it seems that frequently newly recruited legionnaires were simply given citizenship on entering military service.[218] Claudius also granted citizenship to the inhabitants of such out-of-the-way border strongholds as Cologne (which owes its present name to this elevation to the status of *colonia civium Romanorum*, a colony with Roman citizenship) or Camulodunum (Colchester).

No doubt encouraged by this, under Claudius wealthy Gauls petitioned Rome for the right to hold the traditional Roman public offices and to be admitted to the senate—beyond the simple Roman citizenship that they had already. The Roman establishment opposed the Gallic initiative. But when Claudius supported it in a programmatic speech before the senate, the latter, with no real power of its own, was obliged to vote in its favour. The historian Tacitus (∼55 to after 116) gives an account of the controversy and has Claudius point out that the success of the Roman expansion had always been founded on the willingness to grant political participation to defeated adversaries. Claudius (in Tacitus) compares Rome with Athens and Lakedaímôn, whose weakness, according to him, was that they would not let those whom they subjected to their rule take part in it, too.[219]

That great promoter of christianity, Paul, exemplifies important aspects of Roman citizenship in the Claudian age. Luke, in his *Acts of the Apostles*, has him 'appeal unto Caesar' (*Kaísara epikaloúmai*) when brought before a Roman provincial governor, because he is a Roman citizen; the governor thereupon sends him off to Rome ('unto Caesar shalt thou go').[220] Luke was obviously fond of underlining Paul's Roman citizenship, since he brings it up so often and always for dramatic effect. That in turn works so well because Paul's status usually came as a surprise to the authorities—showing that 'unlikely' people could obtain it and enjoy the attendant prestige. Indeed, Paul seems a somewhat implausible candidate for a first-century Roman citizen, a Jew from Tarsós (Tarsus in present-day Turkey), whose ancestors, on account of their religion, one would not expect to have belonged to the established, prominent families of that town that the Roman authorities would likely single out for such an honour. However, Luke has Paul also explicitly call himself a citizen (*polítês*) of his hometown, suggesting that his parents were more than just metics[221]—incidentally illustrating that of course Roman citizenship coexisted with local citizenship and that local citizenship was still prized and important, too.

At Phílippoi in Macedon, Paul is flogged and imprisoned after causing a riot. On learning that he and his companion are 'Roman', the *stratêgoí*—presumably, municipal officials charged with maintaining public order—get worried and send word that the two may leave. The *stratêgoí* evidently hope that they will do so discreetly and not make

[218] Sherwin-White (1973: 247, 321).
[219] Tacitus, *Annals* 11.23–4; cf. Sherwin-White (1973: 241).
[220] Acts 25.11–12.
[221] Acts 21.39.

a fuss, but Paul proudly insists that they first come and see them personally.[222] Later, having provoked the Jews of Jerusalem with a denunciation of their (and his) ancestral religion, Paul is taken to the Roman garrison to be questioned, and about to be flogged again.

> And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion [a junior officer] that stood by, Is it lawful [*éxestin*] for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned? When the centurion heard that, he went and told the chief captain, saying, Take heed what thou doest: for this man is a Roman. Then the chief captain came, and said unto him: Tell me, art thou a Roman? [*lége moi, sy Rhômaíos ei?* The question places heavy stress on both 'thou'—*sy*: the nominative personal pronoun is only used for emphasis in Greek—and 'Roman', expressing surprise, even shock: *you* are a *Roman*?] He said, Yea. And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom [*politeía*: the Greek really means 'citizenship']. And Paul said, But I was free born. [*Egő de kai gegénnêmmai*: literally, 'But *I* was also born so,' i.e. as a citizen. Again the personal pronoun *egő* is used for emphasis, and stressed further by its position at the beginning of the sentence: Paul enjoys one-upping his interlocutor.] Then straightway they departed from him which should have examined him: and the chief captain also was afraid, after he knew that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him.

It is noteworthy that the 'chief captain' apparently (and presumably illegally) *bought* the citizenship that he needed for a career in the regular Roman army—which again raises the question of exactly how, even if Paul himself was a 'born' citizen, his elders had come by that honour.[223]

That the generosity with which Claudius granted Roman citizenship did not meet with universal approval is made clear by the politically influential philosopher Seneca (∼1 BCE to 64) in his satirical settling of accounts with a man he hated. Seneca has the god Mercury encourage Klôthő, one of the Fates controlling the human lifespan, at last to put an end to Claudius' stay on earth, in his own interest as well as that of the public—sixty-four miserable years being enough: 'let death have this one, allow a better one into the empty palace' (Mercury is quoting Vergil, in whose *Georgics* this verse refers to the queen bee). Klôthő replies:

> 'By Hercules, I was planning to give him just a little more time, so that he might give citizenship to those few who haven't got it yet'—for he was determined to see all Greeks, Gauls, Spaniards, and Britons wear the Roman toga. 'But since it is desired to retain some non-citizens [*peregrini*] as breeding stock, and you request it, it shall be so.'[224]

On the other hand, it was this kind of reservation that, in conformity with the Groucho Marx syndrome, ensured that citizenship continued to be coveted and thus an efficient tool for consolidating Roman rule.[225]

As discussed, the period of rule by the senate was long characterized by a certain mutual control and restraint of those belonging to the Roman elite. Now, in the shape of a Tiberius, a Claudius, a Gaius (better known by his nickname *caligula*, 'Little Boot'), a

[222] Acts 16.37–9.
[223] Acts 22.24–9.
[224] Seneca, *Apocolocyntosis* 3.3; Vergil, *Georgics* 4.90.
[225] The Groucho Marx syndrome is so called in Woody Allen's film *Annie Hall* (1977), whose hero explains that Groucho Marx would not have wanted to be a member of a club willing to admit him.

Nero, somewhat dubious figures come to power—even though it must be borne in mind that the extant sources tend strongly to reflect the position of their adversaries and to treat them less than fairly. As portrayed by, for example, a Tacitus, the new regime may appear highly unsavoury. But Tacitus—a senator, provincial governor, and consul—was very close to the centre of power, whose shadow did not actually extend very far. Velleius Paterculus, of middling social rank, depicts Tiberius, whom he knew well from the time when they both served in the army, much less sombrely than the aristocratic Tacitus. Absorbing as the goings-on in the capital were to the Roman elite, they did not even have much effect on the man in the street in that city, let alone ordinary people in the provinces.

What no doubt did get noticed by much of the population was that the end of the continual rivalries within the Roman elite meant less exploitation of the provinces. Under the rule of the senate, those put in charge of the provinces tended to regard their posts as means to further their career in Rome, not least financially. Bringing in taxes was routinely left to tax farmers out to maximize revenue by whatever means (since they got to keep any surplus); they will likely have cooperated with the provincial governor. 'How far he was from despising money,' Velleius quips about Quintilius Varus, probably a personal acquaintance and chiefly famous for losing a decisive battle against the Germans in 9 CE, 'was shown by the way he administered Syria: entering a rich country a poor man and leaving a poor country a rich man.'[226]

It was possible to bring suit against a provincial governor once his term of office was over, and the initiative for this could be taken by the inhabitants concerned. However, in practice the success of such proceedings must have depended on factors like personal friendships or enmities, or the relations, often tense, between the equestrian and senatorial classes (a governor would belong to the latter, tax farmers to the former). The governorship of Varus in Syria can be dated to the years 6–4 BCE. At this time, the rule of the senate had already given way to monocracy, but Velleius' criticism still reflects a situation typical of the old order, about to vanish.[227] Under the new order, the central power in Rome had an interest in keeping the provinces happy and thus quiet and to prevent their serving as a power base or a means of enrichment for potential rivals. Tax farming was abolished, except for some indirect taxes.[228] The central power of the monocracy kept its local representatives under control and intervened little in the affairs of most inhabitants of the empire—to whom, as a result, personal idiosyncracies of the rulers were of little concern. Rulers limited themselves to the role of reactive arbiters, only taking action in local affairs if petitioned by the people concerned.[229] The component units of the empire ran themselves in the manner to which they were accustomed, left alone by the central power as long as there was no upheaval and taxes were paid.[230]

Over time, the multiple forms of rule and social organization within the empire tended towards homogenization in the sense that autonomous towns, always predominant, gained ground against alternative structures, in particular of dynastic rule. This suited the central power: 'Dynasts intrigued and fought against one another, died leaving disputed

[226] *pecuniae vero quam non contemptor, Syria, cui praefuerat, declaravit, quam pauper divitem ingressus dives pauperem reliquit.* Velleius Paterculus 2.117.
[227] Harris (1979: 87–9).
[228] Braund (1988*a*: 8–9); Sherwin-White (1973: 397).
[229] Millar (1977); cf. Bleicken (1982).
[230] Braund (1988*a*: 1).

successions or heirs who were minors, and in general required constant supervision; cities went on for ever and were generally content to maintain their privileges.'[231] Thus the Roman empire of the monocracy presented itself more and more as a network of autonomous municipalities. They retained their own citizenship and even, in the east, a certain, albeit largely formal, legal independence with regard to Rome: formally, as late as the second or even third century, the *póleis* were allies of Rome in a manner reminiscent of the former post-Persian monarchies. Some were exempted from the authority of the local provincial governor (as *civitates liberae* or 'free cities') as well as from the obligation to pay taxes to Rome that fell on the provinces.[232] Also until the second or third century, many *póleis* retained their own coinage. They did not emit gold or silver coins, but divisional coins ('small change') of bronze or copper. Such divisional coins were needed in everyday transactions but were often in short supply: it is telling that such a fundamental and widespread economic problem was often remedied at the local level, not by the central power. Interestingly, the phenomenon gained in importance under the monocracy: in Asia Minor, from the first to the third century the number of *póleis* emitting their own coins grew from 154 to 246.[233]

2.3 Political community and supralocal rule in the pre-christian Graeco-Roman world

> [I]f there were organizations with sovereignty and a territorial monopoly on organized violence before the thirteenth century then there were states. And there clearly were: Greek city-states, Alexander the Great's empire, the Roman empire, and so on.[234]

'There clearly were': on looking more closely this turns out to be a misperception. Neither the *póleis* nor the Greek realms or the Roman empire display the markers of statehood that Alexander Wendt here alludes to.

2.3.1 The absence of domestic sovereignty in the *pólis* and in the Roman citizenry

Who could be called 'sovereign' in a Greek *pólis*? In the pre-Persian *pólis*-world, kingship, once dominant, gave way to collective decision-making. The authority of those entrusted with this decision-making may have been great, but it did not rest on coercion, let alone a monopoly on organized violence as in today's state. A decision could not be imposed forcibly, certainly not on citizens. Corporal, let alone capital punishment was not common, infringement of the rules being sanctioned preferably by the withholding of rights by the community, or by expulsion.

We take for granted that social order requires subjection and at least the threat of coercion. But this idea was anathema to Greek society. Aristotle warns against changing existing law lightly, on the grounds, tellingly, that 'the law *has no power to secure compliance* other than habit, and that can only develop over a long period of time'

[231] Jones (1971: 257).
[232] Nörr (1966); Schulz (1997: 214).
[233] Pekáry (1976: 103, 114); coinage in Asia Minor: Liebeschuetz (1992: 3 n. 1).
[234] Wendt (1999: 214).

(my emphasis).[235] Aristotle posits that executive power is necessary to the *pólis*, only then to discuss at length its near-impracticality: those entrusted with it will attract the hatred of their fellow citizens, so that, assuming it was possible to find a candidate in the first place, the official in question will be tempted to exercise his function too leniently. To counter this difficulty, Aristotle recommends spreading the power to exercise coercion among several offices rather than concentrating it in one, or to let it rotate among offices. In this fashion the unpopularity of coercive measures may have been diluted—but surely their effectiveness was, too.[236]

There was no police, or a public prosecutor. It was possible to go to court, but even in criminal matters, the initiative for this had to come from private individuals, who also had to conduct the necessary investigation, furnish evidence, etc. at their own initiative and expense (it was little different in Roman society).[237] A sentence was not enforced, at least not by any public authority. On coming of age, the Athenian orator Dêmosthénês brought a court case against his guardians, whom he accused of embezzling the fortune of his father that they should have held in trust for him. Dêmosthénês was awarded damages, but the accused successfully evaded implementation of the sentence, for example by absconding their movable property from Athens to neighbouring Mégara.[238] They were not visited by any bailiff, nor was it possible to freeze their bank accounts—these latter being an excellent example of the kind of depersonalized yet massive functional interdependence characteristic of today's society but lacking in Greek or Roman society. Within the applicable legal limits (which ruled out vendettas) self-help remained both licit and essential. The maintenance of social order was based very largely on mechanisms of mutual social control.

Executions of citizens appear to have been avoided in the *pólis*-world. In murder trials in Athens, the accused were free by law to go into exile after the first exchange of speeches. Sokrátês, the most famous Athenian to have been condemned to death by his fellow citizens, proved as much of a maverick in this as in the rest of his life. To judge by the accounts that we have of the affair, he practically forced a reluctant jury to impose the death penalty. It seems that few people would have been unhappy had he escaped from Athens, as apparently was normal in such a situation—but he refused. Note also that he was expected to kill himself, and did so. Certain offenders (like thieves caught in the act) could be put to death immediately by a special committee of eleven members, provided that they confessed. In fourth-century Athens, the alternative to death by poisoning as in the case of Sokrátês was a form of execution in which the condemned person was clamped to a wooden pole and left to die from exposure (*apotympanismós*). Unlike crucifixion, the process was not hastened by wounds. It has been surmised that the idea was to avoid shedding blood, or to make a spectacle of the dying person for as long a time as possible.[239]

It seems impossible even to guess at the frequency with which the death penalty was carried out in Athens, but I suspect that it was rare. I also wonder if execution by *apotympanismós* was ever used against citizens (as opposed to metics, foreigners, or slaves), since such a long drawn-out death was an invitation for friends or family to come

[235] Aristotle, *Politiká* 1269*a* 20.
[236] Aristotle, *Politiká* 1321*b*–1322*a*.
[237] Krause (2004: 17, 60–8); Reynolds (1988: 33–4); cf. Nippel (1995).
[238] Burford (1993: 94–5); Carlier (1990: 47–8).
[239] Krause (2004: 21–3).

to the rescue of the condemned person and therefore was hardly suited for members of the dominant in-group. In the Roman political system, somewhat more authoritarian than the *pólis*-world, the death penalty may have been more common. But even here, suicide was preferred to execution—suicide encouraged by the code of honour at least of the elite and, at least in the period of the early monocracy, by the material incentive of avoiding confiscation of one's property, which a man who killed himself was permitted to leave to his heirs. In any event, the death penalty for free men was no doubt less common even in Roman society than in Latin christendom and *ancien régime* Europe, where the phenomenon of rule, including over free men, was much more pronounced and accepted. Likewise, long-term imprisonment as a form of punishment was not customary in Greek or Roman society.

And the military, in more recent historical experience so often the instrument of 'sovereign' rule? Here we need to recall that the armies of the *pólis*-world, made up of citizens, were not the mass of lower-class, underprivileged wretches, dependent and easily coerced, that for example made up the bulk of the armies of the *ancien régime*. Rather, they consisted of the privileged part of the population. Obedience was not a virtue that came naturally to them, if they considered it a virtue at all. Their commanders had little power over them. 'Evidently, the penalties which were imposed in Athenian armies for disobedience were regularly insufficient to prevent its frequent occurrence. This suggests that as a rule generals did not react with severity to indiscipline,' as Debra Hamel has found. She points out that commanders were, after all, elected by the citizens from among their midst and accountable to the citizens. Although commanders might sanction indiscipline by their troops, they had to be careful not to be sanctioned themselves in return—the easiest way of doing which was not to re-elect them.[240] Nikías, whom the Athenians put in command of their invasion of Sicily in 415, in a letter to the *ekklêsía* describes the difficulties facing him once the campaign begins to drag and the situation of the Athenians becomes more and more critical.

> Of the foreigners [*xénoi*: non-Athenians], those who have embarked under duress [*anankastoí*] head straight back to their *póleis*, and those who were motivated chiefly by high pay and who had a mind to make money rather than to fight . . . desert . . . Others still, who have turned to trading, have persuaded the trierarchs to take Hykkarian slaves on board in their stead . . . I need not remind you that a crew is in top form only for a brief period and that of the oarsmen only a few get the ship moving and manage to keep time. But of all these difficulties the worst is that I, who am in command, am unable to put a stop to them, for you [Athenians] by your nature are hard to control [literally 'rule', *árxai*].[241]

The fourth-century Greek mercenary troops were not apparently noteworthy for their discipline, either, according to Hamel because mercenary leaders were engaged in mutual competition and offended their soldiers at the risk of losing them to their rivals.[242] Roman commanders, by contrast, had greater authority, to the point of being able to impose the

[240] Hamel (1998: 61).

[241] Thukydídês 7.13–14. Trierarchs: citizens whose wealth obliged them under Athenian law to equip triremes at their expense; many of them had promised to augment the pay that the crew received from public funds (cf. Thukydídês 6.31). Hykkarian slaves: the Athenians had conquered the Sicilian town of Hýkkara—now Carini—and enslaved the inhabitants, in whom some participants in the campaign were apparently trafficking.

[242] Hamel (1998: 62–3).

death penalty for indiscipline (executions were carried out jointly by the soldiers). The explanation clearly is that Roman society was less egalitarian. Commanders owed their post not to their popularity with the citizens but to their high social rank. They had the backing of their social class and on the whole probably enjoyed the respect of their hierarchic and social inferiors, dispensing them of the need to curry favour with those under their authority.

Sovereignty, that key element of statehood, implies rule. In the *pólis*-world rule tended to give way to cooperative organization. And to the extent that, in more or less residual fashion, even collective decision-making meant rule over citizens, it cannot be said that rule was an important, let alone constitutive aspect of political community. The citizenry did not form a community because, in whatever form, it was subject to rule. At best it was the other way around, in the sense that once established the citizenry chose to subject itself to the limited rule of those holding public offices. Concerning those elements of the population that were not members the citizenry, one may perhaps view the subordination of resident non-citizens (metics) to the decision-making power of the citizens on whose territory they had settled as rule. But this, too, was not based on coercion (the metics were free to leave instead of complying), nor was it constitutive of political community. On the contrary: the citizens made a point of emphasizing the non-membership of the metics in the political community of the *pólis*.

Fully developed *dêmokratía* as found in Athens was a political system that pushed the rejection of rule (over citizens, anyway) to an extreme. Precisely in order to remove any remnants of hierarchic subordination it assigned decision-making power as far as possible to the citizenry as a whole or to large—and thus representative—committees recruited by lot. In Plátôn, *dêmokratía* is explicitly called *ánarchos* 'devoid of rule', and the *politeía* of the Athenians is referred to as 'complete freedom without any superior authority [*pantelês kai apó pásôn archôn eleuthería*]'.[243] Nikías, in Thukydídês, reminds the Athenians that their city (*patrís*) was 'the freest', where, not subject to any power of command (*anepítaktos*), each had the power (*exousía*) to live as he pleased. Maybe Nikías was expressing his conviction; certainly this was, so to speak, the 'official' self-image of the Athenians.[244]

As mentioned, rule over citizens—by the senate or in its name—was more pronounced already in pre-monocratic Rome. Yet like the *polítai*, in their own view Roman citizens were very much free men, whose membership in the commonwealth and respect for its regulations was voluntary: this was proud adherence, not submission. As in the *pólis*-world, in the absence of power-holders equipped with means of physical coercion, and with troops consisting of the citizens themselves, it could not be enforced. Even here, the element of cooperative organization was such as to leave no place for anything approaching domestic sovereignty, nor would there have been anybody to wield it: the office-holders were not above the law, and even the senate, despite its great power, could not simply lay down the law to the rest of the citizenry.

Nor is it possible to speak of public authority over territory (as opposed to people) either in the *pólis*-world or in the Roman case. As discussed, the territory of the *pólis* consisted of real estate that was the private (if, to some extent, common) property of its citizens and sanctuaries; counterparts of the *pólis* elsewhere in the Mediterranean

[243] Plátôn, *Politeía* 558*c*; *Nómoi* 698*a*, *b*.
[244] Thukydídês 7.69.

world, like Rome, functioned no differently. The citizenry was at bottom an association of landowners whose task was to protect, precisely, their private property. To give that association power over land over the heads of its owners would have appeared nonsensical.

2.3.2 Supralocal rule

As instances of early statehood Alexander Wendt also lists 'Alexander the Great's empire' and the Roman empire. The former is not a happy choice: Macedon apart, what Alexander controlled for a few years was not 'his' empire but the Persian empire, and when he died, it fell apart. It is true that the rulers sharing in his succession were still able to exercise power in vast areas, to say nothing of the Roman rulers from Augustus onwards. Nevertheless: here, too, there was no sovereign, no monopoly on organized violence, and no clearly delimited territory.

As we have seen, the post-Persian Greek rulers were often nominally allied with the *póleis* within their sphere of influence. However powerful they might be, formally they did not act as masters of the citizens of the *póleis*. The citizens administered themselves (as well as their territory and the non-citizens living there), thus dispensing the rulers from that task. If we cannot discern efforts to build up a powerful and conspicuous central administration, it was because such an administration was unnecessary and in addition would have contradicted the cherished depiction of the rulers as just friends and allies rather than masters. Formally, the post-Persian Greek rulers represented only themselves. They were not responsible to anyone. They did not have 'public' authority, exercised in the name of some political community with its explicit, presumed, or pretended consent. Likewise, as in the case of the *póleis* so in the case of post-Persian Greek kingship the notion of 'sovereign' power or public authority of the rulers over territory was lacking. If, in a formal, explicitly acknowledged sense, power-holders controlled territory, it was because the land in question was considered their private property (*basilikḗ chṓra*). If they did not formally own the land, neither did they claim power over it: the private property of the *polítai* was legally out of the rulers' reach.

Like the Romans, and unlike the Athenians and Lakedaimonians, the post-Persian Greek rulers played a game of rewards with the actors in their sphere of influence. As John Ma emphasizes, the participation of the *póleis* in this game implied a certain acceptance on their part of the legitimacy of the rulers. It is this which enabled the rulers to rule, instead of just exercising power. What distinguishes the game of rewards played by the Greek rulers from the more effective one played by the Romans is that it did not integrate the *póleis* in a larger whole. Rulers interacted with individual *póleis* without linking them to each other.

The preference given to the term *symmachía* over *archḗ* in the discourse of Greek kingship marks a difference with the supralocal power wielded by the Athenians and Lakedaimonians. The Athenians explicitly called their sphere of influence *archḗ* 'rule, dominion', and treated their nominal allies and actual subjects with little regard. Given the low degree of acceptance of the *archḗ*, it is possible to wonder whether the Athenians actually exercised rule in the sense of the definition employed here, which beyond mere wielding of power implies the acceptance by the ruled of the ruler's right to do so. Absent such acceptance, power can be wielded only by coercion or the threat of it, with, in the long run, a deleterious effect on the ruler's power base. For, no matter how vast their material resources, power-holders are the more powerful the less they are forced to draw

on those resources: rule is more than coercion. The post-Persian Greek realms, too, were ultimately not kept together by any mutual links between their inhabitants nor by emotional (rather than merely self-interested) loyalty to the king, but by his military power. Yet because the degree of voluntary acceptance of royal rule was relatively high, certainly quite a bit higher than in the *archê* of the Athenians or Lakedaimonians, this military power could be used sparingly: on the whole, its mere existence was sufficient for maintaining the system. It is surely no accident that the post-Persian Greek realms lasted considerably longer than the imperial moment of the Athenians or Lakedaimonians. But the organization of those realms proved inferior to the *imperium Romanum*, which in its turn was much more durable than they.

Still, no more than the Greek realms was the *imperium Romanum* a state, contrary to what, along with so many others, Alexander Wendt takes for granted. In spatial terms, during the period considered in this chapter, the empire did not consist of a territory either clearly demarcated or uniformly subject to some central agency, let alone one endowed with a legal personality of its own or considered to be acting on behalf of the whole population. By *ager Romanus* ('Roman soil') was meant all land that was the property of Roman citizens. It was distinguished from *ager publicus*, land jointly owned by all citizens and often leased out (it also often passed into semi-private ownership whose status might then become an object of dispute). Private property of Roman citizens was not subject to decision-making by the community or on its behalf, and *ager publicus*, too, was really private property in common ownership of the citizens, as found in the Greek world also. Such land, however, made up only a small part of the empire.

The 'people of Rome', *populus Romanus*, grew because more and more people gained citizenship. But it was not connected to any clearly defined territory. The larger the empire became, the larger the number of citizens not resident in or near Rome, or even in Italy. Before citizenship was awarded to most of the free male population of Italy in the early first century BCE, current and former officials of the *municipia* as well as other members of their families had Roman citizenship, but not the other inhabitants. And should one include the population of the *socii*—who were considered part of the *imperium*—in the supposed Roman 'state'? Of the land of the *socii*, who did not even pay taxes or tribute to Rome, it is, if possible, even more true than of the *ager Romanus* that is was not subject to any public authority, suzerainty, or 'sovereignty' exercised by Rome. If one considers the *populus Romanus*, the Roman citizens, as the demographic incarnation of the Roman 'state', one is faced with the problem that, like the Greek *polítai*, they were a clear minority on the territory under their political control. This simply does not fit our notion of the 'people' of a 'state'.

Even after the creation of the provinces, the existing political structures remained. Towns retained their own citizenship, all inhabitants of the empire retained their local laws and traditions. Roman law was law for Roman citizens, but not applicable territorially, to the entirety of the population under Roman control. During the period considered in this chapter, there was almost no legislation for the empire as a whole. Even administrative measures were not applied uniformly—for example, the provinces all had individual tax laws. On the whole, neither the central power nor its agents in the provinces intervened in local politics unless asked or compelled to, their role being essentially supervisory. Like the post-Persian Greek realms, the Roman empire both under the rule of the senate and under the pre-christian monocracy would have

been unthinkable without the self-administering municipalities that relieved the central authority of most administrative tasks.

> In the second century AD, to govern a population estimated at 50–60 million people, there were only about 150 senatorial and equestrian administrators in the Roman provinces, that is one élite administrator for every 350,000–400,000 persons. In southern China, in the twelfth century, with a population of a similar size, there were 4,000 gentry officials working . . . outside the capital . . . , that is one Chinese élite administrator for roughly every 15,000 people. The Chinese government had twenty-five times as many élite administrators at work in the provinces as the Roman government. The scale of difference outweighs any quibbles about the difficulties of comparison.[245]

In fact, it is clear from those figures that to speak of 'government' is inappropriate. There clearly was a central *power*, but even the central *administration*, in the Roman empire as in the Greek realms, was weakly developed, and a central *government* was quite simply lacking. Like the Greek rulers, the Roman rulers did not wield public authority in the empire as a whole. They were not 'sovereign'.

To be sure, their power was extolled. In the mid-first century, Seneca has Nero reflect thus on his position:

> I of all mortals was appointed and chosen to play the part of a god on earth? I decide on the life or death of peoples [*gentes*]? The fate, and position in life, of everyone is in my hands? Destiny has my mouth pronounce what it assigns to each? . . . Nothing prospers anywhere without my volition and benevolence? So many thousand swords, which my peace keeps in check, are unsheathed at my nod? Which peoples [*nationes*] are to be exterminated, which to be resettled, which to be liberated from whom, which kings are to be made slaves and which men are to receive the royal diadem, which cities are to be destroyed and which to rise, is within my jurisdiction? . . . If ever the immortal gods call me to account, I shall present to them, one by one, the human race![246]

In a similar vein, Trajan, in power in Rome in the second century, is called in an inscription *conservator generis humani*, preserver of the human race.[247] In the third century, a petition to the rulers in Rome begins 'To the lords over land and sea and all tribes and peoples of men, the *imperatores caesares* Galerius Valerius Maximinus and Flavius Constantinus and Valerius Licinnianus Licinnus. Your peoples of the Lykians and Pamphylians beseech and implore you' etc.[248] In the fifth (perhaps the late fourth) century, when the empire was shaken to the core by migrating 'barbarian' peoples, the military writer Vegetius still addresses the man on the Roman throne somewhat counterfactually as *imperator invictus, dominus ac princeps generis humani, domitor omnium gentium barbararum*: 'invincible *imperator* (commander), master and first man of the human race, subduer of all barbarian peoples'; and as possessing *imperium totius orbis*, power of command over the entire world.[249]

[245] Hopkins (1980*b*: 121).

[246] Seneca, *De clementia* 1.2, 1.4.

[247] *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* ii.2054.

[248] Inscription from Arýkanda: *tois gês kai thalássês kai pantós anthrôpôn éthnous kai génous despótais autokrátôrsin kaísarsin* (there follow the names) *pará tou tôn hymetérôn Lykíôn kai Pamphýlôn éthnous déêsis kai hikesía*. Şahin 1994: no. 12.

[249] Vegetius, *Epitoma rei militaris* bk. 2 (preface) and bk. 4 (preface).

Yet all this of course has to be taken with a big grain of salt, not just in the case of Vegetius. The rulers were the more easily portrayed as omnipotent as, certainly in the first century or two of the monocracy, they were not called upon to do much for their subjects, who coped quite well on their own. Moreover, Nero talking about 'kings' over whom he has power should give us pause: if the Roman empire was a 'state', and Nero its 'head of state', and if that state or the person at its head were 'sovereign' (as Wendt explicitly asserts), then there should have been no room for 'kings'. That word even for us connotes, if not sovereignty, then at least a considerable degree of independence. But for first-century readers a similar independence was implied when Seneca has Nero refer to 'cities', the more so as the word employed, *urbes*, means big cities not towns. Similarly, 'peoples' (in turn called *gentes*, *nationes*, and *populi* by Seneca—the last in an omitted part of the passage), the third kind of actors over which Nero is powerful, in the first century would have been understood as communities not only with considerable internal cohesion but also with considerable autonomy, whether or not they recognized a suzerain. What the passage illustrates well is that the Roman empire consisted of largely autonomous actors of three types—kings, peoples, cities (or towns: discrete municipalities were autonomous regardless of size, but any term less grand than 'cities' would have been out of place in the context of this panegyric)—over which the Roman rulers had suzerainty but not sovereignty. It is not as if there was a 'core empire' with semi-independent 'satellites' on its periphery: the *entire* empire consisted of largely autonomous units.

Another first-century text, the gospel according to Luke (3.1–2), tells us that

> in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias.

This being an important date in his story, Luke takes care to anchor it firmly in time. A date was habitually defined by referring to someone prominent in office in the particular year in question; Luke rather elaborately names not one person but several, from the supreme head of the entire empire via the governor of the province of Judaea to the local Jewish rulers both spiritual (the high priests in Jerusalem) and secular (the tetrarchs being members of the dynasty of king Herod, in whose succession they shared—although the term means 'rulers of a quarter', it was often applied to co-rulers or rulers of part of a territory regardless of how many of them there were in total). The Jews were one of the 'peoples' alluded to by Seneca; as we can see, they very much retained their own political structures and organization (no *póleis* here) under the umbrella of the Roman province.

The quoted translation in the King James Bible is good, but glosses over an interesting aspect of the original, where the first part of the passage runs *En étei de pentekaidekátôi tês hêgemonías Tiberíou Kaísaros, hêgemoneúontos Pontíou Pilátou tês Ioudaías*—literally: 'in the fifteenth year of the headship (leadership) of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate heading (leading) Judaea'. In other words, no semantic distinction is made between the offices of the 'emperor' and the provincial 'governor', as we call them with words that are entirely of our own time (in Roman terminology, Pontius Pilate was *praefectus* of the province of Judaea, literally someone who was 'placed ahead'). Both simply 'lead' or 'head'—the verb *hêgemoneúô* does not even necessarily imply that they give orders, merely that they are the first or at the top. They were appealed to more than they acted on their own initiative.

Indeed, if we look at him closely, we might call Nero a hegemon. A difference between the role played by Nero in the Roman empire and hegemony in today's sense is that the latter is exercised by the government of a state over those who, in a formal, legal sense, it does *not* govern. The hegemon and those over whom hegemony is exercised are divided by state borders. Borders of this kind were lacking in the pre-christian Mediterranean world. Such borders as did exist were never simultaneously institutional, territorial, and political-demographic as state borders are now. There were no 'bounded entities' of the kind dear to present-day IR theory. On the other hand, Nero does qualify as a hegemon in today's sense in that indeed he had power over people he did not govern—for in an important sense he did not govern anybody in the empire.

2.3.3 Community and ideology in the Greek and Roman empires

I have stressed that the Athenians apparently never even tried to promote acceptance of their *archḗ* by their subjects. It is difficult to see what kind of conceptual basis such an effort could have built on. With its rejection of any form of rule, and its esteem for the unlimited self-determination of free citizens, the established political culture of the *pólis*-world was not a good substrate for propaganda in favour of the *archḗ*. Post-Persian Greek kingship was likewise in a difficult position in this respect. Here, too, as far as I can see no attempt was made to get those exposed to royal power explicitly to accept royal rule as such, that is, royal rule in the abstract, as a concept. Instead, rulers bought acceptance *of themselves personally* by means of gifts. As individuals with vast personal fortunes, and backed by armies larger than those of any *pólis*, they could more easily afford this than the 40,000 *polítai* of Athens, of whom many were extremely poor. In any event, the decision-making bodies of an imperial *pólis* would have found it difficult, if the idea had even entered their heads, to get their constituents to accept expenditure to benefit non-citizens. It is interesting that the towns of Lykía in Asia Minor, linked together in a confederal organization, were under Ptolemaic, then (briefly) Seleukid rule for over a century without ever rebelling. But when the Romans, after their victory over the Seleukid king in 189 BCE, placed Lykía under the authority of the *pólis* of Rhodes (just off the coast of Lykía), the Lykians lost no time to complain in Rome about oppression. They rebelled several times against Rhodes and in 169 gained their independence.[250]

Munificence on the part of a *pólis* would have been bizarre: a cooperative serves its own members, not outsiders. But munificence on the part of a private person was not—indeed, any *pólis* relied as much or more on benefactions by private individuals than on 'public' funds to finance its operation. Such benefactions were received from its own citizens, but also from rich outsiders. Royal munificence might thus be different in terms of scale, but the phenomenon of outside benefactions as such was nothing new. Post-Persian Greek rulers exploited their munificence for ideological purposes. Yet what was exalted was not the rulers *qua* rulers but their *philanthrôpía*, benevolence not towards 'their' people, let alone subjects (no such thing existed in official discourse), but towards the entire Greek world or even mankind. According to Polýbios (second century BCE), it was the characteristic of a king 'that, since he does good things to all [!] and is beloved on account of his munificence and philanthropy, his leadership is accepted voluntarily [!]'.[251]

[250] Jones (1971: 100).

[251] *basiléôs de to pántas eu poioúnta, diá tên euergesían kai tên philanthrôpían agapṓmenon, hekóntôn hêgeísthai kai prostátein.* Polýbios 5.11.

The preamble of a resolution of the citizens of Iasós (on the Aegean coast of Asia Minor) in honour of king Antíochos III from the first decade of the second century BCE insists that in promoting 'all [!] Greeks' the king followed in the footsteps of his ancestors; according to the Iaseians, he acted from the conviction that kingship was necessarily connected (in what way is not clear, the verb in question being partly illegible) with munificence 'towards mankind'.[252] In the preamble of a resolution in honour of the same king and from the same period, the citizens of Teós (also on the Aegean coast of Asia Minor) proclaim that Antíochos had decided to become 'the common benefactor of the other Greek *póleis* and of ours', and that his generosity towards Teós gave 'an example to all Greeks of his behaviour towards those who in their turn meet him as benefactors and with a favourable disposition'.[253]

The fragility of this construction is obvious. Just as, in Isokrátes, king Archídamos stresses the responsibility of the *pólis* Lakedaímôn 'before the assembled Greeks', so here, too, the collective invoked with a view to legitimating the king is the Greek world or the human race. The idea that the Iaseians or Teians owed loyalty to the king as king, in their own capacity if not as subjects than at least as loyal followers, is conspicuously absent. Iasós had been annexed, as it were, by Antíochos shortly before, from Philip V of Macedon, who himself had only conquered it recently. Now the Iaseians rejoice ostentatiously that Antíochos had 'snatched them from slavery' and made them 'masters'—the message to Antíochos being clear, whatever the justification of the implied condemnation of the treatment of Iasós by previous rulers.[254]

For its part, the resolution of the Teians may have been voted after Antíochos had taken that town from the king of Pérgamon, Áttalos. On the other hand, it may also have been voted before; nor is it certain that Antíochos ever did gain possession of the town.[255] The resolution lists painstakingly the favours promised to the Teians by Antíochos, clearly recording the results of negotiations that had preceded it. The honours voted for Antíochos and his wife Laodíkê and listed in this inscription—honorific titles, statues, and cultic acts—appear quite clearly as a *quid pro quo*, with the negotiating position of the Teians rather strong. Indeed, the quoted formulation rather unashamedly makes the favours bestowed on Teós look like bribes both for the Teians and, by virtue of holding out the prospect of similar treatment, other Greeks. Remarkably, too, the wording of the resolution suggests that the relations of king and *pólis* or of king and other Greeks is that of potential *mutual* benefactors, implying equality of rank.

Finally one has to keep in mind—as all those involved at the time of course did without ever saying so in official discourse—that someone had to fund the benefactions of the rulers, that benefactions for some meant exploitation of others, or indeed of the very people that were recipients of benefactions. The resolution of the Teians records that Antíochos had declared the *pólis* exempt from taxation (*aphorológêtos*) and had

[252] *epeidḗ basiléôs megálou Antióchou progonikḗn haíresin diatêroúntos eis pántas tous Héllênas . . . kai to kath'hólon to basileúein nenomikótôs pros euergesían* [. . .]*sthai anthrṓpôn*. Ma (2002: document 26B column 1 lines 9–11, 13–15).

[253] [*epeidḗ*] *koinós euergétês proeírêtai gínesthai tôn te állôn Hellênídôm* [*sic*] *póleôn kai tês póleôs tês hêmetéras . . . .parádeigma pásin ektítheis tois Héllêsin hon trópon prosphéretai pros tous euergétas kai eúnous hypárchontas autṓ*$_i$. Ma (2002: document 17 lines 7–8, 26–7).

[254] *tên de hyméteran pólin . . . eg* [*sic*] *douleías rhysámenos . . . katéstêsen hêmás kyríous*. As n. 252, lines 15–18.

[255] On the dating of the resolution Ma (2002: appendix 2).

'promised' to free it from dues (*syntáxeis*) of some other kind—perhaps the income from tolls, harbour dues, or suchlike—hitherto paid to king Áttalos.[256] This sounds as if Antíochos wanted to keep a backdoor open for himself; after all, the money for his munificence had to come from somewhere. Moreover everybody knew, if they were honest, that the redistribution of resources practised by the Greek rulers did not take place for its own sake, but to cement the rulers' position; in that sense their vaunted munificence and philanthropy was really a sham. But every individual *pólis* competed with its peers in an effort to get more out of this game of rewards than it paid in. For the rulers, this had the advantage that they did not have to fear united opposition from the citizens of different *póleis*; the drawback was that their realms remained devoid of inner cohesion.

As their reluctance to give their chief administrators 'proper' titles also shows, their rule was forever only provisional, a temporary arrangement that the citizens remained ready to shake off at the first opportunity. This is well illustrated by a passage in Livy, based on Polýbios (whose original text is lost), about the conquests of Antíochos III in western Asia Minor. The greater part of the *póleis* there (*civitates* in Livy) submit, because they were situated 'in the plain, or had little confidence in their walls, their arms, or their young men'. But Smýrna (İzmir) and Lámpsakos seize the opportunity to proclaim themselves free at their own initiative (*libertatem usurpabant*). Antíochos fears that they might thereby set a bad example for other *póleis*. He threatens to attack (*vi terrebat*), but at the same time addresses the two *póleis* in gentle language (*leniter*), promising to give them soon (*brevi*) that which they desired, as long as it was clear to them and everybody else (*cum satis ipsis et omnis aliis appareret*) that they had obtained their freedom from the king rather than just grabbing it (*ab rege impetratam eos libertatem, non . . . raptam habere*). The two *póleis* retort that Antíochos should be neither surprised nor outraged that they were unable to accept with equanimity the prospect of a deferral of their freedom (*nihil neque mirari neque suscensere Antiochum debere, si spem libertatis differri non satis aequo animo paterentur*). Clearly, no amount of philanthropy (covertly backed by big armies) could wholly overcome the ideology of civic liberty that had proved the undoing also of the *archḗ* of the Athenians and Lakedaimonians.[257]

Roman rule and the pacification of the Mediterranean region that it brought about were the result of military prowess. Augustus himself speaks of 'peace born of victory', *parta victoriis pax*.[258] But another factor, just as essential, of both the expansion and the stability of the Roman empire was that unlike the Greek realms it was also based on political community. If the empire was based on superior power, it nevertheless also held out the prospect of joining the ranks of those wielding that power or at least on whose behalf it was wielded, of joining a prestigious community. Roman propaganda could and did exploit that. The Romans themselves noted their talent for organizing rule, reflecting on it and making it part of their self-image. Thus, Livy has the tribune Canuleius give a speech underlining the ability and readiness of the Romans to integrate outsiders ('we have granted citizenship even to defeated enemies') and vaunt the beneficial effects of this policy: 'As long as the origin of a man who gave proof of virtue was no cause

[256] As n. 253, lines 18–20.

[257] Livy 33.38. Ma (2002) uses this passage as point of departure for his study of the relations between Antíochos and the *póleis*.

[258] Augustus, *Res gestae* 13.

for prejudice, Roman rule expanded [*crevit imperium Romanum*].'[259] The speech does not necessarily permit the conclusion that the values expressed in it were current in 445 BCE, when Canuleius supposedly made it. But even if Livy (64 or 59–17 CE) is projecting them back, the text at least makes clear that such were the values of his own time, the period of transition from rule by the senate to monocracy. It also shows that the values in question were at that time considered to go back a long way, to be a Roman tradition.

The self-image of the Romans as exercising a type of rule characterized by a participatory and integratory element, founded on legal norms and involving a responsibility towards those placed under it, in particular an obligation to protect them, is well expressed by Tacitus. He has a military commander, Petilius Cerialis, give a speech before members of Gallic tribes intended to strengthen their loyalty towards Rome. The background is the rising against Roman rule instigated in 69 CE by the Batavians, a Germanic people in the Rhine estuary, under the leadership of Claudius Civilis, a Romanized German. According to Tacitus Petilius addressed the Gauls as follows:

The Roman military leaders and commanders came to your land and that of the other Gauls not from any selfish motive [*nulla cupidine*] but at the request of your forebears, weakened by quarrels among themselves to the point of perishing, whereas the Germans, called to help, enslaved allies and foes alike . . . .Nor did we occupy the Rhine to protect Italy, but in order that no second Ariovistus [German military leader at the time of Julius Caesar who operated in Gaul] should subject Gaul to his tyranny [*regnum*].

Or do you suppose that you mean more to Civilis and his Batavians and the tribes [*gentes*] beyond the Rhine than did your fathers and grandfathers? The reason why the Germans come over to Gaul is always the same: licentiousness [*libido*], greed [*avaritia*], an urge to settle somewhere new [*mutandae sedis amor*] so that they might leave their swamps and wastelands and appropriate for themselves this wonderfully fertile soil as well as yourselves. Yes, freedom and other high-sounding words serve as their pretexts; for no one has yet sought to make slaves of others and gain dominion for himself without abusing those very terms [*ceterum libertas et speciosa nomina praetexuntur; nec quisquam alienum servitium et dominationem sibi concupivit, ut non eadem ista vocabula usurparet*].

Tyranny and war [*regna bellaque*] have always been frequent throughout Gaul until you joined our law [*donec in nostrum ius concederetis*]. However often we were provoked, we have only ever imposed on you, by the law of victory [*iure victoriae*], that by means of which we might safeguard the peace [*pax*]. For tranquillity [*quies*] among the peoples cannot be had without troops [*arma*], or troops without pay [*stipendia*], or pay without taxes [*tributa*]. Everything else is shared [*cetera in communi sita sunt*]. Very often [*plerumque*] you yourselves command [*praesidetis*] our legions, you yourselves administer [*regitis*] this and other provinces; nothing is kept away from you or closed to you [*nihil separatum clausumve*] . . .

If ever the Romans are expelled (may the gods prevent it), what will happen but war of every people against every other? Through eight hundred years of good fortune and military discipline this great edifice [*compages*: the empire] has grown up, whose destruction cannot but be fatal to the destroyers. But it is you who run the greatest risk, because of your gold and your wealth, the chief motives of war. Therefore, cherish and cultivate peace [*pax*], and the city [Rome] that we, vanquished and victors alike, possess by the same right [*urbs, quae victi victoresque eodem iure obtinemus*].[260]

[259] Livy 4.3.
[260] Tacitus, *Histories* 4.73–4.

The 'we' uniting victors and vanquished deserves notice. The picture painted by Petilius is idealized—propaganda. But in the eyes of its addressees it will have contained a kernel of truth. In order to understand why the *archḗ* of the Athenians was small and short-lived, and, by contrast, the Roman empire huge and never threatened from within, it is almost sufficient to place the Melian dialogue next to the speech of Petilius.

Another testimony both to this Roman imperial ideology as such and to its adoption on the part of the subjects is provided by the *Roman oration* of Públios Aílios Aristeídês (Publius Aelius Aristides, 117 to ∼187), an orator from Smýrna (İzmir). He was both a Greek and a Roman citizen, as his name indicates—tripartite in the typical Roman fashion, with first name (*praenomen*), family name (*nomen*), and *cognomen*; the first two here being Latin, the third Greek. The speech was delivered in Rome itself, probably in 143. Despite being a panegyric, it contains much perspicacious analysis.[261]

Aristeídês stresses the Roman contribution to uniting the peoples of the Mediterranean region, which they had as it were turned 'into a single family [*oíkos*]'.[262] Someone travelling in this unified world no longer met foreigners, but went from one home town to the next (*ek patrídos eis patrída*).[263] Aristeídês draws the usual comparison between Rome and Athens: the Athenians did not know how to rule; failing to treat the *póleis* kindly and at the same time unable to control them efficiently, they were 'at once brutal and weak [*bareís háma kai astheneís*]'.[264] The technique (*téchnê*) of Roman rule, on the other hand, rested ultimately on the magnanimous Roman attitude in particular with regard to citizenship (*hê perí tên politeían kai hê tês dianoías megaloprépeia*).[265] Many citizens of Rome had never even seen that city, yet they controlled their own city for Rome better than any garrison could have done: they were not resented as foreigners, and at the same time their power was accepted the more easily because people knew that any wrongdoing on their part would be punished by Rome. Nor did representatives of the central power discriminate against anyone, since the fact of common citizenship (*koinḗ hê politeía*) meant that they did not consider themselves as wielding power over foreigners.[266] War within the empire had become a distant memory.[267] The current situation (*ta parónta*) was agreeable and profitable (*aréskei kai symphérei*) to rich and poor alike: there no longer was an alternative to life in the empire (*állôs ou léleiptai zên*).[268] As a result, no one wanted to leave the empire, no more than one would want to leave the helmsman of a ship: if anything, people feared that Rome might leave them.[269]

How widespread this ideology must have become is also shown by the 'Roman patriotism' of late poets like Claudian and Rutilius Namatianus. Claudian, born in Alexándreia in Egypt, was a Greek native speaker, but wrote in Latin. He speaks of Rome as *mundi communis amor*, the common love of the world (alluding to a well-known

[261] On this speech see the commentary in the edn. by Richard Klein (Aílios Aristeídês 1983), as well as Bleicken (1966), Oliver (1953), Sherwin-White (1973: 425–30), and Swain (1994: 274–84).

[262] Aílios Aristeídês, *Eis Rhṓmên* 102.

[263] Aílios Aristeídês, *Eis Rhṓmên* 100.

[264] Aílios Aristeídês, *Eis Rhṓmên* 57.

[265] Aílios Aristeídês, *Eis Rhṓmên* 59.

[266] Aílios Aristeídês, *Eis Rhṓmên* 64–5.

[267] Aílios Aristeídês, *Eis Rhṓmên* 69–70, 104.

[268] Aílios Aristeídês, *Eis Rhṓmên* 66.

[269] Aílios Aristeídês, *Eis Rhṓmên* 68.

anagram: *Roma* read backwards is *amor*).[270] Ideas contained in the speech of Petilius Cerialis, or the *Roman oration* of Aristeídês, recur in Claudian around the year 400, as they do in the poem *De reditu suo* by Rutilius Namatianus of about 415/17. Here is Claudian:

haec est in gremium victos quae sola recepit	She (Rome) alone received the vanquished into her bosom,
humanumque genus communi nomine fovit,	embracing the human race by a common name,
matris, non dominae ritu, civesque vocavit	as a mother, not as a mistress. She called citizens
quos domuit nexuque pio longinqua revinxit.	those whom she conquered, linking distant parts through ties of loyalty.
huius pacificis debemus moribus omnes	It is to her peaceful ways that we all owe it if
quod veluti patriis regionibus utitur hospes,	the visitor enjoys foreign lands as though he were born there,
quod sedem mutare licet, quod cernere Thylen	if each may live where he pleases, if viewing Thule,
lusus et horrendos quondam penetrare recessus,	remote corners once dreaded, is but a sport,
quod bibimus passim Rhodanum, potamus Oronten,	if indifferently we drink the waters now of the Rhône and now of the Orontes,
quod cuncti gens una sumus.	if we all are but one people.[271]

2.3.4 *Roma aeterna*

Political community or rule was not thought of in the Greek and Roman world as intrinsically durable, as the state is thought of now. On the contrary, political structures were regarded as inherently fragile. They were the plaything of (blind or arbitrary) fate—*týchê* or *fortuna*. In the second half of the second century BCE, Polýbios quotes Dêmḗtrios of Pháleron, a writer of the late fourth century, to the effect that empires never last: no one had expected Persian rule to succumb so suddenly to the Macedonian assault, yet one day *týchê* might deal likewise with Macedonian rule. So it did, Polýbios notes, when in 168 BCE Rome deposed the last Macedonian king.[272] In his *Roman history*, written around the middle of the second century CE, Appian of Alexándreia reports that the Roman commander Scipio, who supervised the destruction of Carthage in 146 BCE, wept at the sight of the burning city and openly expressed his fear that, like Troy and Carthage, or the Assyrian, Persian, and Macedonian empires (*archaí*), one day Rome would fall, too.[273] Polýbios and Appian both wrote in Greek, but the notion is also found in Roman thinking:

Of all the cities [*urbes*] that at any time have held sway over the world [*rerum potiuntur*], and of all that have been the splendid ornaments of empires [*imperia*] not their own, men shall some day ask where they were, and they shall be swept away by some catastrophe or other

[270] Claudian, *De consulatu Stilichonis* 3.52. On the 'Roman patriotism' of that time, see Paschoud (1967).

[271] Claudian, *De consulatu Stilichonis* 3.150ff. Thule: thought of as an island in the northern ocean, sometimes apparently equated with Britain; Orontes (Oróntês): river in the Near East, now Asi in Arabic and Turkish (flows through Antiócheia, then a very important city; now Antakya).

[272] Polýbios 29.21.

[273] Appian, *Libykḗ* 132.

—thus Seneca (first century CE) has Cato the Younger meditate on the vanity of all earthly greatness.[274]

The notion of Rome as the 'eternal city' runs very much counter to this kind of thinking. Its rise seems to be connected with the transition to monocracy, which constituted such a revolutionary change that much ideological effort was invested in legitimating it. The founder of the new regime, Octavian-Augustus, sought to present himself as the guardian of Roman greatness, which itself was exalted vigorously by him and his apologists. The final phase of the period of rule by the senate had been a time not only of upheaval, but, in the view of the defenders of the new regime, of decadence, of effeminacy, of too much 'eastern', 'Greek', un-Roman sophistication. Augustus and his followers did not invent this conservative criticism. But, whether from conviction, or from political opportunism, or both, they exploited it, presenting themselves as working to restore supposedly ancient, simple, manly Roman values—the values by which Rome had grown great, that made it different, superior: the foil being the Greek east. This may well have been popular. If authors of the Augustan age like Livy and Vergil reflect the rather chauvinistic spirit suffusing the new regime, that may be partly due to the patronage that they received from its supporters, including Augustus himself. But it is probably safe to say that this propaganda also struck a chord both with them and with their audience.

As a sign of chosenness, it was now suggested that the city and empire of the Romans, but only that city and that empire, would not end. Tibullus (∼50–? 19 BCE) speaks of Rome as *urbs aeterna*, the 'eternal city', for Livy (64 or 59–17 CE) Rome is *urbs in aeternum condita*, the city founded for eternity.[275] In two lines of the *Aeneid* among the most famous in Latin literature, Vergil (70–19 BCE) claims that the Romans were granted this special favour by Jupiter, the supreme god:

his ego nec metas rerum nec tempora pono;	To these I assign neither material limit nor finite time;
imperium sine fine dedi.	empire without end (or: border) I gave them.

In John Dryden's paraphrase: 'To them no bounds of empire I assign,/Nor term of years to their immortal line.' The dative *his* ('To them' in Dryden's rendering) is emphasized by its position at the beginning of the verse and suggests an implicit 'as opposed to others'.[276] The contrast that in Vergil is only implied, that Roman rule *alone* was to last forever, is spelled out in later authors. Claudian (around 400) states explicitly that the empires of the Lakedaimonians, Athenians, Thebans, Assyrians, Persians, and Macedonians had all perished, 'but Roman rule shall never come to an end'.[277] The notion of Rome as the city that, 'ancient as the heavens' (Claudian), 'shall live as long as there are men' (Ammianus Marcellinus, fourth century) seems to have gained in urgency at a time when Roman rule was in fact under constant serious threat. It is also interesting that Ammianus speaks of the 'eternal city' in passing: the emperor Julian 'made Maximus prefect of the eternal

[274] Seneca, *Epistulae* 71.15 (1970: 81–3; modified).
[275] Tibullus, *Carmina* 2.5.23; Livy 4.4; cf. Livy 5.7, 28.28.
[276] Vergil, *Aeneid* 1.278–9.
[277] *nec terminus umquam Romanae dicionis erit.* Claudian, *De consulatu Stilichonis* 3.159ff.

city', *Maximum urbi praefecit aeternae*. Clearly the expression had, already by the fourth century, become the clichéd figure of speech that it has remained to this day. [278]

The hypothesis that the concept of *Roma aeterna* is a concomitant of the transition from the traditional political system of rule by the senate to the veiled military dictatorship of Augustus and his successors is consistent with the fact that Seneca, in the reflection on the transience of cities that he attributes to Cato, fails to exempt Rome, post-Augustan though he is. Indeed he does not mention Rome, but how could Cato, ardent Roman patriot that he was, not be thinking of Rome when he speaks of 'cities holding sway over the world'? To intellectuals like Seneca, who, although deeply conservative and attached to traditional Roman values themselves, were also critical of the new regime, Cato the Younger was a hero, a veritable martyr of the old senatorial regime. Not implausibly, Seneca did not consider it appropriate to associate a paragon of traditional Roman virtue with the new-fangled and preposterous notion that Rome would last forever.

Appian likewise lets Scipio anticipate that one day Rome, too, would fall. If I am right, in his sources from the Scipionic period (like Polýbios) he would not have found the *Roma aeterna* concept. Certainly Polýbios, with his famous theory (to which we shall return) of why polities rise and fall, applies it to Rome without any suggestion that Rome would only rise and never fall. On the other hand, writing under the monocracy, in the second century CE, Appian himself must have been familiar with the concept. This might explain why he implies that, even though he in fact did not, Scipio should properly have spoken about the future demise of Rome in hushed tones: Appian specifies that when Scipio was asked why he was so shaken by the demise of Carthage, Scipio explained himself 'unguardedly' (*ou phylaxámenos*) and 'openly' (*saphôs*), albeit in what is depicted as an intimate conversation (*syn parrhêsía*$_i$) with a confidant (none other than the historian Polýbios). Appian apparently thought it unorthodox for Scipio to talk like this, suggesting a climate where there was a certain pressure on people to subscribe to the notion that Rome would not fall; he may have been projecting this back into a period when in fact it did not yet exist. In the early fourth century, Augustine reports a theory that in a famously cryptic passage about the antichrist, whose appearance signifies that the end of the world is close, the apostle Paul is equating the antichrist with Nero, but abstained from naming him lest he give offence by implying that the Roman empire might be about to end.[279]

The notion of Rome as the eternal city was not congenial to the Greek world, where it was largely ignored.[280] Not only was it arrogant in its premiss that whereas everybody else's empires perished, Rome would last, but its hidden venom was directed specifically against the Greek world, with regard to which Roman culture always laboured under an inferiority complex. Greek culture had set the accepted standards, among which was the notion that political structures were fragile. Suggesting that this might be true in the Greek case but not of Rome was both a gesture of revolt and a sneer. The legend of the founding of Rome by refugees from Troy, destroyed by Greek invaders, is in itself basically a story of defeat made good, an overcompensation: Rome is Troy resurgent, it

[278] *urbs aequaeva polo*, Claudian, *Bellum geticum* 54; *victura dum erunt homines Roma*, Ammianus 14.6.3; second quotation ibid. 21.12.24. Cf. also Rutilius Namatianus, *De reditu suo*.

[279] Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 20.19.

[280] Paschoud (1967: 16).

is the revenge of the Trojans on their Greek enemies. Propertius (∼50 to after 16 BCE) has the (female) seer on the citadel of Troy address the Greek attackers thus:

Vertite equum, Danai! Male vincitis: Ilia tellus
vivet, et hunc cineri Iuppiter arma dabit.

Turn round your horses, Danaans! You conquer vainly: the soil of Troy
shall live, and to these ashes Jupiter shall give arms.

The life eternal is, as it were, preceded here by a triumphant resurrection.[281]

The only, if fascinating example of the concept of *Roma aeterna* in Greek language seems to be a hymn to Rome raising numerous questions—who was the poetess 'Melinnṓ' under whose name it has come down, when and where did she live (if she did, i.e. if the name is not a pseudonym), what was the occasion for this poem etc.

Chaîré moi, Rhṓma, thygátêr Árêos
chryseomítra daíphrôn ánassa,
semnón ha naíeis epí gas Ólympon
aién áthrauston.

I salute you, Rome, daughter of Árês,
mistress of warlike [or: keen, astute] spirit, your head encircled with gold,
dwelling on earth on holy mount Ólympos, never to perish.

soi mónai, présbista, dédôke Moíra
kýdos arrḗktô basilḗion archás,
óphra koiranḗion échoisa kártos
agemoneúêis.

To you alone, highest one, has destiny granted
indestructible, royal glory of empire,
so that, with commanding strength, you might lead.

sai d'ypá sdeúglai kraterṓn lepádnôn
stérna gaías kai poliás thalássas
sphíngetai; sy d'asphaléôs kybernáis
ástea laṓn.

Yours is the harness whose powerful straps
press the breasts of the earth and of the gray sea,
while you, securely, steer the cities of the peoples.

pánta de sphállôn ho mégistos aiṓn
kai metaplássôn bíon állot'állôs
soi mónai plêsístion oúron archás
ou metabállei.

All-powerful time brings all things down,
transforming life now this way, now that:
To you alone the wind of empire filling your sails it leaves unchanged.[282]

The poem has been variously dated between the fourth century BCE and the first century CE. In fact, the subject, *Rhṓmê*, is not necessarily the Greek name for Rome—the word also means 'strength' (the spelling *Rhṓma* in the poem is due to the fact that, as was the custom in Greek poetry, it imitates canonical models in archaic dialect). In fact the work is preserved because it was included in an anthology on the subject of manliness that cannot have been compiled before about 400 CE.

Defenders of an early dating can argue that the allusion to the Roman empire is only apparent and coincidental. It seems more plausible, however, that the poem deliberately plays with the semantic ambiguity of its keyword: in form a cultic hymn (*hýmnos*) to a goddess who is the personification of strength, it can also be read as a tribute to the capital of the Roman empire—likewise pictured and revered as a goddess, the *dea Roma*. Her cult was common in the Greek east in the second century BCE, when Rome

[281] Propertius, *Carmina* 1.53–4.

[282] Melinnṓ, *Eis Rhṓmên* (last stanza omitted). 'your head encircled with gold': *mítra* usually means a headband. However, in Greek mythology the Amazons, too, are daughters of Árês, the god of war, and in their case it is their girdle that is referred to as *mítra*.

was popular there for having liberated many *póleis* from Antigonid or Seleukid rule; many therefore think that the poem must have been written in this period. On the other hand, the repeated *soi mónai* 'to you alone' to me seems so obvious an echo of the claim both to timelessness and, thereby, uniqueness that the Augustan poets made on behalf of Rome that I find it hard to believe that the poem should predate them.

Maurice Bowra objects that a (post-)Augustan work would no doubt allude to the supreme power-holder. On the other hand, he calls the poem 'indeed an oddity' and 'something of a sport, to which the extant remains of Greek poetry present no parallel'. A possibility that he seems to have overlooked is that the poem pretends to be older than it is, or at any rate disdains, for stylistic reasons, any allusion to the 'modernity' of its own time if that indeed was the Augustan or post-Augustan period. After all, the language itself is deliberately archaic, too. What if this is not the work of a Greek at all, but of a Latin speaker, a Roman? Bowra notes that it combines eclectically elements found in other Greek poetry; he lauds the cleverness with which they are assembled while criticizing the diction ('slow, cumbrous progress . . . adjectives . . . too weighty for their place . . . order of the words too contorted').[283] Roman poets writing in Latin imitated Greek models quite slavishly and were thus obliged to know the language very well. It seems plausible that they dabbled in Greek verse composition themselves, perhaps at the request of their teachers, just like those reading classics at university did routinely in both Greek and Latin until recently—with the more gifted among them no doubt earning the kind of mixed review that Bowra, the archetypal Oxford classics don, accords 'Melinnṓ'. A female pseudonym may have been chosen because the rather unusual metre is that of the poetess Sapphṓ.

2.4 The relations between autonomous actors and communities in Greek and Roman political thought

That the political thinkers of the Graeco-Roman world hardly touch on the relations between autonomous political actors has often been pointed out, and the cause of this 'omission' speculated upon.[284] In fact, the political structures of the period rendered theorizing on the external relations of autonomous political units superfluous. It is hardly surprising that authors of the period did not generally feel the need to explain to people living two millennia or more later why they failed to express themselves on something that for them was not an issue. And when, for once, it *is* explained, present-day authors fail to catch on. A passage in Plátôn's *Nómoi* (*Laws*) is so remarkable from the point of view of present-day IR theory that its neglect is difficult to understand. In Plátôn's text a man from Crete, Kleinías, holds forth on political life on that island, whose Doric population had institutions reminiscent of those of Lakedaímôn (also Doric). In Crete (as in Lakedaímôn), everything is geared towards war (*pros ton pólemon hápanta exêrtytai*), we are told. Kleinías asserts that by the arrangements in question the lawgiver had

[283] Bowra (1957: esp. 21, 22, 28).

[284] e.g. Garlan (1972: 4–5); Garlan (1989: 22–3); Jehne (1994: 18–19); Maier (1987: 30–1); Momigliano (1960); Purnell (1978: 19–20).

expressed his condemnation of the lack of understanding of most people, who do not realize that there is forever a lifelong continuous war of every *pólis* against every other [*hóti pólemos aeí pásin diá bíou synechḗs estí pros hapásas tas póleis*]. . . . For [according to the lawgiver as interpreted by Kleinías] what most people call peace is but a word [*mónon ónoma*]; in reality, by the nature of things every *pólis* is forever in a state of undeclared war against every other [*tôi d'érgôi pásais pros pásas tas póleis aeí pólemon akḗrykton katá phýsin eínai*].

According to Kleinías all private and public arrangements in the *pólis* should properly take account of this fact, as they were no use if success in war could not be ensured.[285]

Evidently, the notion that the relations between independent political actors amount to perpetual warfare, routinely attributed to Thomas Hobbes, was current already two millennia before. However, whereas Hobbes presents this notion as truth, Plátôn's Kleinías is allowed to pontificate on it only to be trashed by his intellectually superior interlocutor—referred to only as 'the man from Athens'. It is also worth noting that Kleinías himself qualifies his opinion as contrary to that of the majority. Against Kleinías, the man from Athens argues that the lawgiver ought to focus on the domestic aspect of political community, not its external relations. Success in war? There are two kinds of war, Kleinías is told,

> one that we all call *stásis* [civil strife], the sort of war that is worse than any other . . . ; the second type we shall all, I think, consider to be the sort that we engage in when we are at odds with outsiders and people of foreign stock [*pros tous ektós te kai allophýlous*]. This is far less harmful [*polý pra$_i$óteros*] than the other sort.[286]

This whole exchange takes place at the beginning of the work, orienting it towards the domestic political sphere. Even when, in the Third Book, the topic is what the survival of a political order depends on, this domestic outlook is maintained: 'By Zeus,' exclaims the man from Athens, 'is a kingdom, or indeed any dominion, ever destroyed other than by itself?'[287]

According to Plátôn, the success of a commonwealth or dominion was rooted in its domestic organization. This was true also of success in its external relations. There was no need therefore of a special theory of external relations or the mutual relations between autonomous actors. This view is by no means peculiar to Plátôn, but entirely typical of the period. In his *Speech of Archídamos*, Isokrátês (fourth century BCE) has the commander (and later king) of the Lakedaimonians list the prerequisites enabling the *pólis* to hold its own against adversaries:

- acting justly (*to ta díkaia práttein*);
- having a good political system (*to kalôs politeúesthai*);
- moderate living (*to sôphrónôs zên*);
- being prepared to fight the enemy to the death (*to méchri thanátou máchesthai tois polemíois ethélein*);

[285] Plátôn, *Nómoi* 625*e*–626*b*.
[286] Plátôn, *Nómoi* 629*d*.
[287] *Basileía de katalýetai, ô prós Diós, ê kaí tis archḗ pópote katelýthê, môn hypó tinôn állôn ê sphôn autôn?* Plátôn, *Nómoi* 683*e*.

- being convinced that nothing is worse than to lose the respect of one's fellow citizens (*to mêdén houtô deinón nomízein hôs to kakôs akoúein hypó tôn polítôn*).[288]

This list is a far cry from the factors that would now be considered essential for success in foreign politics. But in a world where, as we saw, there was little 'caging' of individuals through mutual dependence (for example on account of shared infrastructure), the major challenge to any political community was to keep its members together and motivate them to collaborate. Consensus and mutual loyalty were important to a far greater extent than the fact that they are of course desirable even in today's world lets us realize. In today's society individuals are highly dependent on each other. I rely enormously on people I never see, but without whom I would, for example, have no food, heating, air travel, or internet banking. What connects me to those people are, to a large extent, relations—direct and, far more importantly, indirect—that are monetary rather than personal. (This would be true even in the absence of a 'market' economy: the 'command economy' of the former eastern bloc was not fundamentally different in this respect.) I do not have to be loyal to other members of society or even my own political community to obey the norms by which today's society operates: if I do not, it is not society that ceases to function properly, it is I. Individuals in the pre-christian Mediterranean world were far less dependent on each other. Moreover, even normatively, functional interdependence was shunned.

The disadvantage of the striving for autarchy at the lowest possible level, vaunted for example by Aristotle,[289] was that it did nothing to promote social cohesion. Here lay a major problem for political thinkers. Plátôn (in a very radical passage that, for example, advocates the abolition of private property) calls for 'such laws as will ensure the unity of the *pólis* so far as can be done'.[290] However, many thinkers felt that laws were in fact a bad way to ensure unity, or more generally the proper functioning of political community. 'Good honest people', Isokrátês maintains, 'will not need much written text, but will, by means of just a few understandings, easily reach agreement concerning both their private and their public affairs.'[291] On the contrary, 'the great number and precision of the laws [*nómoi*]' is seen by Isokrátês as 'an indication of bad organization of the *pólis* in question [*sêmeíon tou kakôs oikeísthai tên pólin taútên*]'.[292] For Isokrátês, proper organization of the *pólis* did not rest 'on resolutions voted by the citizens, but on custom [literally 'habits', *éthê*]'.[293]

Similar thinking is found in Roman society. Seneca observes that 'by its nature the human spirit is stubborn and attracted to the opposite thing and to the difficult thing; it follows more easily than it is led.' He warns Nero that transgressions frequently punished would be frequently committed (*videbis ea saepe conmitti, quae saepe vindicantur*). 'Believe me, it is dangerous to demonstrate to the citizenry [*ostendere civitati*] the extent to which evil people [*mali*] are in the majority.' Clearly, Seneca viewed coercive measures by the authorities (such as they were at the time) with scepticism, insisting that tolerance

[288] Isokrátês, *Archídamos* 59.
[289] e.g. Aristotle, *Politiká* 1252*b* 29, 1261*b* 12, 1326*b* 2, 1328*b* 12.
[290] Plátôn, *Nómoi* 739*d*.
[291] Isokrátês, *Panêgyrikós* 78.
[292] Isokrátês, *Areopagitikós* 40.
[293] Isokrátês, *Areopagitikós* 41.

was a more effective way to promote good habits (*boni mores*) than intransigence.[294] Tacitus, for his part, opposes an idealized image of the Germans, as yet uncorrupted by too much wealth and too much peace, to his morally degenerate contemporaries: in Germany, good habits have greater power than good laws do elsewhere (*plusque ibi boni mores valent quam alibi bonae leges*).[295] In another context Tacitus establishes a link between increasing legislation and the decay of the Roman commonwealth (*corruptissima re publica plurimae leges*).[296]

This type of attitude explains the centrality of the concept of virtue (*aretê*, *virtus*) in authors of the period. Aristotle stresses that virtue was required both of those in charge of the community and, significantly, those over whom they were in charge. 'For if those who rule lack moderation and fairness, how can they rule well? And if those being ruled lack those qualities, how can they be ruled well? For if they are dissolute and cowardly, they will never act as they should.'[297] Aristotle, in this context, does not even discuss the option of compelling them. In the case of free men it did not exist to any great extent. This is why the mindset of the citizens commanded so much attention, why the greatest fear of the period was that the civic spirit might lapse. Success or failure even in the external relations of a community was attributed to this type of factor.

Military power was built on social cohesion. As pointed out, the period relied almost exclusively on muscle power, reinforced but little by simple machines, and the combat power of a community thus depended almost exclusively on organizational and psychological qualities. The phalanx as *the* instrument of combat in the pre-christian Mediterranean world also epitomizes what was the essence of military strength in this period, being (almost) invincible if, and as long as, nobody broke ranks. Rather than disciplinary power—weakly developed especially in the Greek world—what was important was mutual social control: the fear of losing the respect of one's fellow citizens that Isokrátês has Archídamos stress and which, as he underlines elsewhere, presupposed the internalization of the norms of the community by socialization from an early age.[298]

A citizen army could not be built from people accustomed to luxury—hence the allusion to moderate living in Archídamos' speech. Motivating the fighters—the more important as it was more difficult to compel them—was easier if what they were to fight for could be regarded as just, worthy of sacrifice. Moreover, as we shall see, it was often pointed out that acting justly won one friends and acting unjustly enemies. By comparison, the role of manpower and material resources appeared negligible; certainly it was of very limited interest to authors of the period. Archídamos' list does not include it. On the contrary: it is commonly accepted, Isokrátês has Archídamos point out,

> that we [Lakedaimonians] have been superior to all the Greeks, not because of the size of our *pólis* or the number of its inhabitants, but because the citizen community [*politeía*] which we have established is like a military camp, well administered and rendering willing obedience to its leaders.[299]

[294] Seneca, *De clementia* 1.22–4.
[295] Tacitus, *Germania* 19.5.
[296] Tacitus, *Annals* 3.27.
[297] Aristotle, *Politiká* 1259*b*–1260*a*.
[298] Isokrátês, *Archídamos* 59; *Areopagitikós*, esp. 40ff.
[299] Isokrátês, *Archídamos* 81 (1928–45: i 395; modified).

Nor did Isokrátês consider this to be a characteristic only of the Lakedaimonians. Elsewhere it is his fellow Athenians whom he reminds that

> We all know that success does not visit and abide with those who have built around themselves the finest and strongest walls, nor with those who have collected the greatest population in one place, but rather with those who organize their *pólis* most nobly and wisely [*tois árista kai sôphronéstata tên hautôn pólin dioikoúsin*].[300]

Saying what he says everybody believes is typical of Isokrátês; it is this predilection for commonplace thinking that makes him such a good source for the mentality of the period. Indeed the same notion is also found in Aristotle, who explains that while, in any case, a *pólis* must not exceed a certain 'due measure', a bigger *pólis* was not automatically better. Although he discusses the matter at some length, it seems not to have occurred to him to consider it from a military angle (largely absent from the *Politiká*).[301]

Roman writers share this tendency to dismiss the importance of material resources. 'It is not troops or treasure that protect a kingdom [*regnum*],' Sallust (86–34) has Micipsa, the aged king of the Numidians, admonish his successor Iugurtha,

> but friends, whom you can neither command by force of arms nor buy with gold: it is by means of loyalty and a sense of duty [*officio et fide*] that one acquires them. . . . I will leave you a strong kingdom [or: kingship], if you [Iugurtha and his co-heirs] are virtuous [*boni*]; if not, a weak one. For it is unity by which what is small will grow, disunity by which what is greatest will perish [*concordia parvae res crescunt, discordia maxumae dilabuntur*].[302]

In a similar vein, Sallust has the younger Cato admonish the senate in Rome: 'Do not believe that it was by force of arms that our forebears turned a small commonwealth into a great one [*Nolite existumare maiores nostros armis rem publicam ex parva magnam fecisse*]'—but by their selfless rectitude, sadly lacking in the present generation.[303] For Sallust, 'international' change is all a question of virtue:

> For dominion [*imperium*] is easily preserved by the faculties [*artes*] that generated it in the first place. But where inactivity replaces effort, where licentiousness and arrogance throw out moderation and fairness, good fortune decays along with manners [*mores*: also 'custom, habits'—the equivalent of Greek *éthê*; in Latin moreover *mores* means 'character']. Thus dominion is always passed on from the less virtuous to those who are most virtuous [*Ita imperium semper ad optumum quemque a minus bono transferetur*].[304]

Not a word on population size or the number of troops, economic potential or geostrategic factors. We may be inclined to reject such thinking as romantic fantasy, but Sallust is right. The Romans, who did not strike their own coins until the third century BCE, were latecomers to wealth, their city under the rule of the senate not much of a tourist attraction—its brick drabness gradually replaced by marble splendour only after the transition to monocracy. Augustus gave himself credit for the large-scale introduction of marble to the city, having decided that its appearance was inappropriate for the majesty

[300] Isokrátês, *Areopagitikós* 13 (1928–45: ii 113; modified).
[301] Aristotle, *Politiká* 1326*a*.
[302] Sallust, *Bellum iugurthinum* 10.
[303] Sallust, *Catilina* 52.
[304] Sallust, *Catilina* 2.

of empire.[305] For a long time the only material superiority of the Romans consisted in the quantity of their troops. That in turn was not based on economic resources, but on the organization of the citizenry (large and growing—meaning more fighters) and of the network of satellites (the colonies and allies). Once money started to gain importance in Rome, too, it was not, as in Athens, the allies that were taxed, but (albeit very moderately) the citizenry. How well this worked was proved by the Second Punic War against Hannibal: despite his crushing victories, most allies remained loyal to Rome.

Nowadays, we consider the power of a state to be first and foremost a function of its material resources. Polled on this question, ancient authors would likely have been unanimous in their disagreement. Indeed, if the Romans kept expanding their sphere of influence, the growing resources at their disposal were not the cause of this process, but a concomitant, and in a sense more of a problem than helpful. The growing wealth was distributed unequally and a cause of growing social tension within the citizenry. Philosophers, Seneca observes, hold that wealth is not really a good. But the syllogisms so popular among them were hardly the way to convince many people that they were right. Seneca, who preferred good rhetoric to the formal logic of many philosophers, suggests a thought experiment.

> Let us suppose that we have been summoned to a citizen assembly [*contio*]; an act dealing with the abolition of riches has been brought before the meeting. Based on those syllogisms, would we support it, or oppose it? Would they help us persuade the Roman people to praise and demand poverty—the foundation and cause [!] of their empire [*paupertas fundamentum et causa imperii sui*]—and, on the other hand, to recoil from their present wealth, reflecting that they found it among those they conquered, and that this was the source from which ambition and bribery and disorder found their way into a city once characterized by the utmost scrupulousness and sobriety?[306]

Under the rule of the senate, a *contio* was an informal meeting of the citizenry, especially for debating new laws. Such laws were not passed there, but in a formal meeting (*comitia*), where no discussion was allowed. By the time Seneca was writing, this kind of procedure had become politically meaningless (if it still took place at all). Seneca clearly imagines his assembly as taking place in the past, the good old days of true Roman greatness—if also of beginning decadence. Seneca, formerly a senator, a consul, and one of two co-regents of the empire while Nero was a minor, incidentally was not a distant observer but as involved in the Roman politics of his day as one could be.

Greek writers in fact tend to dismiss even army strength as irrelevant in war—more conspicuously than do Roman writers, although the notion is found in Sallust, too. Whereas the Roman experience was one of success owed to numeric superiority, the key experience of the Greek world was the success of defending it against two Persian attempts at conquest undertaken with far superior resources. 'A great many people, but few men [*polloí men ánthrôpoi, olígoi de ándres*],' Heródotos scoffs at the invasion force of Great King Xérxês. Thukydídês has the Corinthians portray as common knowledge 'that the Barbarian [= the Persians, when they attacked Greece] came to grief mostly by his own fault.'[307] Isokrátês attributes the victories of the early-fifth-century Greeks over

[305] Suetonius, *Augustus* 28; cf. Augustus, *Res gestae* 20–1.
[306] Seneca, *Epistulae* 87.41 (my trans., with borrowings from Seneca 1970: 347).
[307] Heródotos 7.210; Thukydídês 1.69.

the Persians to their being more virtuous.[308] Conversely he has nothing but contempt for those who let themselves be impressed by the apparent power of the Persians: they can only hold the Greeks at bay because the Greeks now prefer to make war on each other.

According to Isokrátês, the Persians were actually weak, not because of a lack of resources, but because of a lack of inner cohesion. For people 'brought up and organized like that [*hoútô trephómenoi kai politeuómenoi*]', that is like the Persians, were incapable of developing either civic or military virtue. They were nothing but an undisciplined mass, trained to be slaves (*óchlos átaktos . . . pros tên douleían pepaideuménos*). Those among them held in the highest esteem had never lived according to the precepts of equality, community, and citizenship (*homalôs oudé koinôs oudé politikôs oudepôpot'ebíôsan*), instead always acting arrogantly towards some, slavishly towards others. Though hardly a fair description of the Persians, nevertheless this is a valid testimony to the values and mentality of the *pólis*-world and in particular of the Athens of the *dêmokratía*—including its hypocrisy, if we remember how few people actually held citizenship and how little the Athenians were immune to treating non-citizens arrogantly themselves.[309] Be that as it may, justice was held to be important. Isokrátês has Archídamos list a whole series of victories won against the odds, this being a recurrent theme in the speech in question;[310] indeed, for Archídamos 'every war of the past has been ultimately decided not in accordance with power, but in accordance with justice [*ou katá dynámeis, allá katá to díkaion*].'[311]

For the thinkers of the *pólis*-world, power was bad for the *pólis*. In the eyes of Isokrátês, the recent history of both the Athenians and the Lakedaimonians offered proof of this: both were able to maintain their dominion over others only with difficulty and briefly, before coming to grief. Under the impression of the catastrophic defeat of the Lakedaimonians at Leúktra in 371 and more recently of the war of 357–5 between Athens and some of its allies, Isokrátês articulated his thinking on the negative effect of power on those wielding it in the *Areopagitikós* and in particular in his speech *On the Peace* of 355. 'Anyone can see that those who have been in the strongest position to do what they pleased [*en pleístais exousíais gegenêménoi*] have been involved in the greatest calamities, ourselves [the Athenians] and the Lakedaimonians first of all.'[312]

The power (*dýnamis*) that fell to the Lakedaimonians after knocking out the Athenians in 404 and taking over the dominion of the Athenians over the Aegean disrupted their traditional, moderate way of life. Instead it filled

> the citizens with injustice, indolence, lawlessness, and avarice, and the commonwealth [*to koinón tês póleôs*] with contempt for its allies, covetousness of the possessions of others, and indifference to its oaths and covenants . . . . Never ceasing from their ill treatment of others, did they not bring upon themselves the disaster at Leúktra? Some maintain that this disaster was the cause of the misfortunes which overtook Spártê, but they do not speak the truth. For it was not because of this that they incurred the hatred of their allies; it was because of their insolence [*hýbris*] in the time preceding that they were defeated in this battle and fell into peril of losing their own city.[313]

[308] Isokrátês, *Panêgyrikós* 82 with the preceding sections.
[309] Isokrátês, *Panêgyrikós* 150–1.
[310] Isokrátês, *Archídamos* 40–6, 60, 82, 99.
[311] Isokrátês, *Archídamos* 36.
[312] Isokrátês, *On the Peace* 104 (1928–45: ii 73; modified).
[313] Isokrátês, *On the Peace* 96–102 (1928–45: ii 69–73; modified).

The disaster of the Athenians of 404 is attributed by Isokrátês to the same moral factors. He recalls the heroism of the generation defending Athens against the Persians. The *dêmos* of Athens at that time were

able to conquer in battle all who invaded their territory. Held worthy of the meed of valour when the fate of Greece hung in the balance [a reference to the war against the Persians], they were so trusted that most of the *póleis* of their own free will gave themselves over to them. But . . . this power [*dýnamis*] brought such lack of self-control [*akolasía*] over us as no one would ever praise; in place of our habit of conquering those who took the field against us it instilled into our citizens such ways that they had not the courage even to go out in front of the walls to meet the enemy; and in place of the good will which was accorded us by our allies and of the good repute in which we were held by the rest of the Greeks we became an object of such hatred that the *pólis* [Athens] barely escaped being enslaved and would have suffered this fate had we not found the Lakedaimonians, who were at war with us from the first, more friendly than those who were formerly our allies.[314]

(The allusion to citizens who lack 'the courage even to go out in front of the walls' refers to Periklês' strategy in the great war started in 431 of sheltering the citizens behind the walls of Athens and avoiding battle; when Athens surrendered in 404 and the Lakedaimonians occupied it, they rejected calls for revenge from *póleis* formerly subject to the Athenians.)

At the end of his *On the Peace*—where, as we saw earlier, he urges the Athenians to forswear naval dominion altogether—Isokrátês sums up his recommendations in three points. In the first place, it was necessary to take advice on the affairs of the *pólis* from people whose advice one would also seek in private matters, specifically the *kaloí kàgathoí*, the more respected and normally richer citizens, rather than seek systematically to weaken such persons in an overly zealous attempt to protect the *dêmokratía* and in the process turn them from merely suspected into real enemies of that political system. This exhortation was directed against the shortsighted populism of the *ekklêsía* and other decision-making bodies and of the people seeking influence within them (a main subject also of the *Areopagitikós*).

Secondly, we should treat our allies just as we would our friends and not grant them independence in name [*mê lógôi men autonómous aphiómen*] while in fact giving them over to our commanders to do with as they please. We should not exercise our leading role [*mêdé epistatómen*] as masters [*despotikós*] but as allies [*symmachikós*], since we have learned the lesson that while we are stronger than any single *pólis* we are weaker than all of them together. Thirdly we should consider that nothing is more important, save only to show reverence to the gods, than to have a good name among the Greeks. For upon those who are so regarded they willingly confer both power [*dynásteia*] and leadership [*hêgemonía*].[315]

It is typical that the list of reforms proposed by Isokrátês begins with the internal situation, the constitution of the *pólis*. Here, too, external failure (in this instance, the defeat of the Athenians at the hands of some of their erstwhile allies in 355) is attributed to bad organization of the *pólis* rather than lack of resources. 'For nothing will go to

[314] Isokrátês, *On the Peace* 76–8 (1928–45: ii 54–5; modified).
[315] Isokrátês, *On the Peace* 133–5 (1928–45: ii 91–3; modified).

plan for those whose organization is not well thought out in its entirety.'[316] Isokrátês' conviction that the success of a political community was exclusively a function of its domestic organization and condition is likewise found in other authors, even far apart chronologically. Three-hundred-and-fifty years earlier, around 700, the poet Hesiod had written that those who dealt fairly with people both within and outside the *pólis* and never departed from what was right would see their *pólis* prosper (*toísi téthêle pólis*), and Zeus would preserve it from war.[317] A hundred years after Isokrátês, Polýbios would affirm categorically that 'the chief cause of success or the reverse in all matters must be seen in the quality of the constitution [or: the condition of the citizenship].'[318] This incidentally answers the possible objection that an exclusive focus on the domestic sphere was possible for a *pólis* as powerful as Athens but could not have been afforded by a weaker community. Áskra in Boiôtía, the rustic *pólis* written about rather grumpily by Hesiod in *Works and Days*, was small—unsurprisingly so in light of how he describes it. And Polýbios is simply making a general statement, long after Athens had sunk back into powerlessness.

Lack of interest in the question of material power explains why in the pre-christian Mediterranean world the concept of balance of power was unknown. To be sure, a focus on relative power and the notion that it might be wise to prevent an adversary from gaining strength, or to play actors against one another, is found occasionally. There are a number of instances in Thukydídês (1.44, 1.69, 6.6, 8.46, 8.57). It is clear from those instances that the need to pay attention to the distribution of power was regularly rediscovered as the result of a specific situation, rather than being a principle of foreign policy routinely applied. Quite sophisticated ideas on the need to balance plural actors are found in a speech by Dêmosthénês, *For the Megalopolitans*, from the mid-fourth century. The Athenians at that time had an alliance with Lakedaímôn; Dêmosthénês argued that the Athenians should switch sides and support Megalópolis against Lakedaímôn. But his rather contorted advocacy of this proposal again demonstrates the lack of an established or self-evident principle to which he could have appealed. He could not say, as in the eighteenth century he would have done, 'the balance of power is in jeopardy, therefore it is necessary to do x.' Instead, he has to deal with fundamentals, the need to reconcile advantage (*to symphéron*) and justice (*to díkaion*). That, clearly, in this case was not easy. Dêmosthénês failed to sway his fellow citizens, scandalized at his call for what they considered a betrayal. In any case, even Dêmosthénês simply wanted to weaken other actors for the benefit of Athens and, unlike Isokrátês, would have been the last to exhort the Athenians themselves to moderation. His aim was always to restore Athens to its imperial position of the fifth century. He, too, thought about the balance of power in purely tactical terms, not in terms of an abstract normative principle as would be the case in the eighteenth century.

The only formulation of the balance of power in terms of a principle of which I am aware from the period is found in Polýbios. Polýbios tells us that king Hiérôn of Syracuse, caught between Rome and Carthage, was

[316] *oudén gar hoiónte gígnesthai katá trópon tois mê kalôs perí hólês tês dioikêseôs bebouleuménois.* Isokrátês, *Areopagitikós* 11.

[317] Hesiod, *Works and Days* 224–8.

[318] *Megístê d'aitían hêgêtéon en pantí prágmati kai pros epitychían kai tounantíon tên tês politeías sýstasin.* Polýbios, fragment from the preface of the Sixth Book (my trans., based in part on Polýbios 1922–7: iii 271).

convinced that it was useful for him for securing both his power [*dynasteía*] in Sicily and his friendship with the Romans that the Carthaginians should be preserved, so that the strong [i.e., the Romans] would not be able to attain their ultimate object entirely without effort. In this he reasoned very wisely and sensibly, for such matters should never be neglected. One must never help anybody gain so much power [*têlikaútê dynasteía*] that it becomes impossible to challenge him even over acknowledged rights.[319]

Hiérôn was an ally of the Romans against the Carthaginians, but had no interest in seeing the Romans eject the Carthaginians from the part of Sicily that they controlled, since that would have rendered him superfluous as an ally. Once again, Polýbios' praise for the wise king and his exhortation to do as the king did indicate that he was not simply reminding readers of a commonplace. Finally, as in the other instances the thinking here is purely tactical, adopting the perspective of specific actors rather than looking at them from the level of the system of which they form part—as was routinely done in the eighteenth century, where the balance of 'Europe' was what needed to be preserved. In none of the instances adduced is any thought given to the distribution of power as an attribute of the system.

Now what happened if the actors did not represent any political community at all, as in the case of the post-Persian Greek rulers? The fact that no political community corresponded to their realms also meant that the normal approach of authors of the period to the problem of foreign-political success or failure—looking at the organization and domestic condition of the community—could not work. Indeed trying to develop any theory of the relations of such potentates at all was a patently unpromising endeavour. A king might be capable and powerful, only to face ruin because of the revolt of a family member. Take the case—one of many that could be cited—of Séleukos II. No sooner had he managed to fend off an attack by Ptolemy III of Egypt, who had sought to take advantage of the change on the Seleukid throne (so-called Third Syrian War 246–1), than his brother Antíochos Hiérax ('the Falcon') tried to put himself on that throne. In the resulting turmoil Antíochos was ultimately defeated, but meanwhile a local grandee, Áttalos I of Pérgamon, occupied almost the whole of Asia Minor and proclaimed himself king. The new Seleukid king Séleukos III was murdered after only a brief reign, to be succeeded by Antíochos III (not 'the Falcon'). Antíochos' brother-in-law Achaiós regained much of Asia Minor from Áttalos, only to adopt the royal title himself in 221. But his usurpation ended in failure: Antíochos having allied himself with Áttalos against him, he was betrayed and executed.

This kind of sequence of events is obviously not very amenable to social science theorizing, which can deal with the general social and political conditions in which such events took place, but not the events themselves. In any case their effect on society was negligible. Whether a given *pólis* recognized Séleukos or Áttalos or Ptolemy as its formal or informal suzerain was of no great moment to it, certainly not in the long term. It did not depend on any king for its well-being, and anyway one king was much like the next. In such conditions, explaining the goings-on in what Michel Austin, as quoted, has called 'the royal club' was a task for psychology rather than political thinking. Tellingly, the kind of political literature that seems to have flourished most in the post-Persian period was what in another era would be called 'mirrors of

[319] Polýbios 1.83 (my trans., based in part on Polýbios 1922–7: i 225).

princes', treatises addressed to rulers and mixing homage with moral and practical advice.[320]

Contingency as a dominant factor of political events, in particular those more to do with inter-individual than inter-collective relations, was called *týchê* or *fortuna* by authors of the period. Polýbios, the second-century BCE historian, employs the concept frequently. Given the complexity, indeed the confusing nature of the events that he describes, *týchê* is called upon to explain the constant surprise turns, acting like some kind of *dea ex machina*: 'Thus ever is it the way of Fortune to decide the most weighty issues against rule and reason.'[321] Usually a force of chaos, occasionally *týchê* does act constructively.[322] In light of his own proclivity to fall back on *týchê*, it is curious to find Polýbios criticizing others for using the concept indiscriminately and lazily.[323] Polýbios himself transcends it precisely where the 'normal approach' that we examined earlier was applicable, for example in the context of his discussion of the Achaian league, a confederation of *póleis* on the Peloponnese that prospered for a considerable period. 'Clearly', Polýbios remarks of its success, 'it would not be proper to speak of *týchê* ... We must rather seek for a cause.' Unsurprisingly in light of what has been said above, for Polýbios the cause in question consists in a wise constitution and a constructive collective mentality.[324]

Polýbios justifies the choice of the years 220–168 as the period with which as a historian he mainly concerns himself by stating that

> Previously the doings of the world had been, so to say, dispersed, as they were held together by no unity of initiative, results, or locality; but ever since this date [220] history has been an organic whole [*hoíon ei sômatoeidḗ symbaínei gínesthai tên historían*], and the affairs of Italy and Libýê ['Libya': here designates all northern Africa] have been interlinked with those of Greece and Asia, all leading up to one end.[325]

This 'end' (*télos*) is the unification of the Mediterranean region by the Romans. The growing strategic interdependence of the actors in that region had reached the critical stage where conflict between them could not but be ultimately about dominance over the region in its entirety.[326] In this struggle for dominance the Romans prevailed; Polýbios' ambition is to explain why. But his phrasing of the question is already indicative of the kind of answer he is looking for:

> For who is so worthless or indolent as not to wish to know how and *by means of which system of polity* [*pôs kai tiní génei politeías*] the Romans in less than fifty-three years have succeeded in subjecting nearly the whole inhabited world to their sole rule [*archḗ*]?[327]

Once again, then, the domestic organization of the Roman political community is seen as the key to its success in foreign politics. Every time Polýbios returns to his main question, of why the Romans rose to universal dominance, their ascension is lauded as the work of *týchê*, who in this case had for once done something positive. However, in

[320] Adam (1970); Schulte (2001).
[321] Polýbios 2.70 (1922–7: i 411).
[322] For an overview and analysis of the relevant passages in Polýbios, see Roveri (1982).
[323] Polýbios 10.5.
[324] Polýbios 2.38. Polýbios was Achaian himself.
[325] Polýbios 1.3 (1922–7: i 7–9; modified).
[326] Cf. Polýbios 5.104.
[327] Polýbios 1.1 (1922–7: i 3–5; modified).

those passages *týchê* is always mentioned in the same breath with the issue of the Roman constitution.[328]

His reflection on this issue led Polýbios to develop, in his famous Sixth Book, the notion (found in different form also in Plátôn and Aristotle) that in the evolution of a commonwealth the various types of constitution succeeded each other, in circular progression (*politeíôn anakýklôsis*). In Polýbios' model, the three basic types *basileía* (kingship), *aristokratía* (rule by the best), *dêmokratía* (rule by the mass of the citizens) follow each other, separated by phases of the 'good' basic types decaying into their 'bad' degenerate forms: *monarchía* (rule by a single person), *oligarchía* (rule by the few), *ochlokratía* (rule by the mob); then the cycle begins anew. For Polýbios, the superiority of the Roman constitution was due to the manner in which, by cleverly joining elements of all three 'good' types, it counteracted the cycle and hindered the transition to the 'bad' types. To corroborate his thesis Polýbios provides a detailed analysis of the Roman constitution, followed by a discussion of Roman military organization.

For Polýbios his theory also explained why Rome prevailed over Carthage.

> For since everything, be it a body [*sôma*], a polity [*politeía*], or an action [*práxis*], by nature [*katá phýsin*] has a period of growth, then of prime, and finally of decay, and as everything in them is at its best when they are in their prime, it was for this reason that the difference between the two commonwealths [*politeúmata*] manifested itself at this time. For by as much as the polity of the Carthaginians [*hê Karchêdoníôn*] had grown strong and successful earlier than that of the Romans, by so much had Carthage [*hê Karchêdṓn*] at that time [i.e. during the war between Hannibal and the Romans] already moved beyond its prime, while Rome [*hê Rhṓmê*] had at that very moment reached its prime, as far at least as the condition of the polity was concerned.[329]

Polýbios' work is only partially extant, but it seems that he did not work out his theory with any great rigour. For example, it is not clear whether and how he thought *anakýklôsis* in general on the one hand, and the rise and decline posited in the passage just quoted on the other hand fit together (in 6.4 there is talk about the rise and decline of a polity *within* each phase of the *anakýklôsis*), or whether and how the Roman constitution, combining as it did all three 'good' constitutional types, could evolve at all. Yet Polýbios' notion of the rise and decline of commonwealths can be read as a rationalization of the empirical fact that the stability and cohesion of any political community of the period was always precarious, to the extent that external threats paled by comparison and did not appear worthy of special treatment by political thinkers. What is most remarkable in Polýbios is, once again, the exclusive focus on the domestic sphere. The *anakýklôsis* takes place without any external input at all. Likewise, for Polýbios the fact that Rome has the better of Carthage is ultimately the chance result of their respective domestic condition at the time they clashed—there is no concern at all for the way they perhaps impacted on each other, or even their relative strength. In fact, as shown, manpower was quite significant in helping Rome prevail; although, indeed, if Rome had more troops it was as a result of the superior organization of its sphere of influence. Polýbios could have adduced that in support of his thesis. But he did not look at that kind of issue. The domestic sphere to him was important to the exclusion of everything else.

[328] Polýbios 1.4, 6.1, 8.4.

[329] Polýbios 6.51 (my trans., based in part on Polýbios 1922–7: iii 385).

2.5 Thukydídês

Kenneth Waltz, in his famous 1979 *Theory of International Politics*, posits that international politics should be explained at the level of the international system and not at the level of the states of which it is made up. Waltz explicitly refuses to consider the possibility of domestic politics influencing 'international' outcomes. With Greek and Roman writers, it is the opposite: for them, domestic politics alone explains everything, including change at the level of the system of which individual autonomous actors form part. This basic insight, and our other findings so far, allows better access also to the work of an author both among the greatest and among the most enigmatic of the Graeco-Roman world. I have criticized that, like any historical period, the pre-christian Mediterranean world has frequently served as a screen for projecting back notions concerning the functioning of society or the relations between autonomous political actors of our own period. A prominent figure like Thukydídês is highly vulnerable to this phenomenon. What, in particular, twentieth-century IR writers have said about Thukydídês shows very little effort to understand him on his own terms, and is permeated instead with eagerness to prove that 'international' relations display similar patterns in any period.[330]

As discussed in Chapter 1, this is an objective in particular of 'realism', the dominant school of thought in IR. But as a social science paradigm IR 'realism' is not limited to IR. It imbues, in more or less latent fashion, also much commentary on Thukydídês by historians and classicists. Their primary goal is not to make claims about the nature of 'international' or 'interstate' politics, but they, too, approach Thukydídês with notions informed by the 'realist' paradigm. Like 'realist' IR authors, many historians and classicists 'find' in Thukydídês what they themselves project onto him. Historiography and IR literature thus become mutually reinforcing.

Robert Gilpin as a well-known representative of IR is also representative of this tendency. 'In honesty,' he observes, 'one must inquire whether or not twentieth-century students of international relations know anything that Thucydides and his fifth-century compatriots did not know about the behavior of states.'[331] This is typical language. It would be possible to collect, from the exegetical literature on Thukydídês, any number of claims, often made in passing, that 'states' as such act (implicitly: in any period) in certain ways (specified according to context). Such claims are either used to explain the text (as in the case of historians and classicists), or distilled from the text as its supposed essence (in the case of IR writers). Thus Gilpin attributes to Thukydídês a long list of political recommendations that let Thukydídês' book appear as a primer or manual for statesmen.[332] But unlike what readers unfamiliar with Thukydídês are bound to assume, those recommendations are not in fact formulated by the Greek author; they are inferences by Gilpin. In Thukydídês' book itself, maxims and recommendations—though not those listed by Gilpin—are only found in the speeches that Thukydídês puts in the mouths of his protagonists. They can no more be treated as the views of the author than the lines of characters in a play.

[330] On Thukydídês in IR, see e.g. Garst (1989) and Kauppi (1991).
[331] Gilpin (1981: 227).
[332] Gilpin (1991: 36).

With his eagerness to read things into Thukydídês, in particular practical recommendations, Gilpin continued a well-established tradition.[333] But it is precisely his abstention from generalization and authorial comment that is Thukydídês' hallmark. 'The narrative never becomes demonstration, the isolated fact never becomes a general law. The narrative takes on the plausibility of a demonstration, the isolated fact hints at the possibility of its recurrence; but never does Thukydídês affirm anything himself; never, as a consequence, is he at risk of saying too much.'[334] The ease with which views and maxims are attributed to Thukydídês is in part the result of his refusal to comment explicitly on his own narrative, and the implicit call on readers to draw their own conclusions.

To this is added the difficulty of understanding the text precisely. It was felt already—indeed, paradoxically, to a greater extent—by readers in the Graeco-Roman world. They did not have their lives made (seemingly) easier by translations, which did not then exist. Translators after all have to come up with intelligible meaning; they cannot easily reproduce vagueness and ambiguity. Their offerings thus necessarily let the work appear simpler than it is. Cicero (106–43) complains that the language of some passages of the work is so intricate as to make them 'almost impossible to understand' (*vix ut intelligantur*). He scoffs at those who invoked the Greek author in justification of their own graceless diction: no sooner did they make some haphazard and disjointed utterance than they thought of themselves as 'real Thukydídêses' (*cum mutila quaedam et hiantia locuti sunt . . . germanos se putant esse Thucydidas*). Cicero lauds Thukydídês as a 'wise, rigorous, serious analyst' (*rerum explicator prudens severus gravis*)—but a little obscure, *subobscurus*.[335] Cicero was not a native Greek speaker, but even one who was, Dionýsios of Halikarnassós (active 30–8 BCE), berates Thukydídês for his style.[336]

Yet this style is intentional and not the result of incompetence. The artful, highly self-conscious narrative does not argue so much as it hints and insinuates, indeed manipulates.[337] It is consistently multi-perspectival—as if Thukydídês had anticipated the 'postmodern' critique of conventional historiography and of its implicit claim to objectivity. In Thukydídês, there is no single truth that historians can find or at least get close to. Instead, the major protagonists all have their own truth. Hence the many speeches, illustrating their competing points of view, often equally plausible despite being incompatible. Hence, too, the near-abstention from authorial comment: Thukydídês does not claim to know better, least of all than the actual protagonists. As a result, there is hardly any aspect of his work on which commentators are agreed. To almost any question that it raises opposite answers have been given.

Thukydídês' veiling act is deliberate, programmatic. But other factors conspire to make him more difficult still than he intended. There is the circumstance that the book is unfinished, apparently orphaned in the middle of a reworking. Moreover, the problem of communicating across language barriers can be enormous in the case of a text where every nuance counts. Today's readers have two-and-a-half millennia of further historical experience (and historiography) behind them that is difficult to abstract from—though, in fact, the need to do so is not even perceived. Unable, without a great deal of background

[333] Stahl (1966: 16–17).
[334] de Romilly (1956: 300); my trans.
[335] Cicero, *Orator* 30–32; *Brutus* 29.
[336] Dionýsios of Halikarnassós, *Perí tou Thoukydídou charaktêros* 24.
[337] See in particular Connor (1984) and de Romilly (1990).

knowledge, to return to the mental horizon of the Persian-era *pólis*-world, nor helped in this respect by translators and commentators, today's readers operate with a different set of mental coordinates. With those different coordinates, they will not arrive where Thukydídês is trying to direct them. Not only was Thukydídês addressing himself to a world more culturally alien to us than we normally stop to reflect, but, as a result, his very words are often garbled by translators who rashly make the text say what now sounds plausible but which Thukydídês probably never thought of.

The best example of this is Thukydídês' famous identification of 'the truest cause' (*hê alêthestátê próphasis*) of the outbreak of war in 431. Translators and commentators are so familiar with the concept of balance of power in 'international' politics that they happily project it into the famous passage in the twenty-third chapter of Book One; that in turn is then taken as 'evidence' that 'already Thukydídês' thought in terms of the balance of power, which therefore must be a timeless concept. The passage in question is, in fact, typically vague and ambiguous, at least in the original; translators tend to be more trenchant. Probably the most widely used English translation of Thukydídês is that by Rex Warner in the Penguin Classics series: according to this, 'the real reason' of the war was, simply and unambiguously, 'the growth of Athenian power and the fear which this caused in Sparta' (i.e. Lakedaímôn). The very substitution of the expression 'the real reason' for the original expression 'the truest cause' is emblematic of the spirit in which Warner undertook his task: the original expression implies that the cause in question was not the only one, whereas what Warner simplistically replaces it with does just that.[338]

With his *alêthestátê próphasis*, Thukydídês has provoked a huge debate that has been going on since the nineteenth century and which here can only be alluded to. Anyone trying to pin down what, concretely, Thukydídês meant by his formulation is in for a great deal of confusion, and risks losing himself or herself in a semantic quicksand. The question of why war broke out in 431 is answered perfectly adequately by the *aitíai kai diaphoraí*, the 'accusations and disputes' which Thukydídês mentions in the same breath as the *alêthestátê próphasis* and which he proceeds to set forth in some detail (we have already reviewed them in Section 2.2.1.5, Subsection 'The rise of the Athenians and the bipolarization of the *pólis*-world'). So it is puzzling to see them seemingly played down in favour of the *alêthestátê próphasis*. Then there is the fact that Thukydídês does not make apparent any continuous increase of Athenian power, let alone in the—presumably—decisive years immediately preceding the outbreak of war. If the growth of Athenian power was really the deep cause of the war, then why does Thukydídês fail to elaborate on this? Those who have endeavoured to show that Athenian power really did increase in the years before the outbreak of war are compelled to look for information outside Thukydídês. Thus George Cawkwell, in one of the more recent efforts to show that '[t]he truest explanation was correct' (Cawkwell prefers 'explanation' as a rendering of *próphasis*), concedes that Thukydídês himself fails to corroborate it.[339] Nevertheless, for Cawkwell, too, it is the increase of Athenian power that the *próphasis* refers to, and he takes it upon himself, with somewhat speculative arguments, to corroborate what the Greek author did not.

Conversely, it is much easier, and more immediately plausible, to deny any increase of Athenian power in the years before 431. Robert Gilpin declares Thukydídês to be

[338] Thukydídês (1972: 49).
[339] Cawkwell (1997: 39, 23).

the ancestor of his own theory of 'hegemonial' war, according to which major conflict is caused by a shifting of the power balance between important actors.[340] For him (as for Cawkwell), the Lakedaimonians went to war to prevent Athens from becoming too powerful. But against him Richard Lebow asks why, in that case, the war of 431 only broke out when it did: 'The first problem with the fear-of-Athens thesis is that the war broke out twenty-five years after Athenian power had reached its zenith in the 450s.'[341] Donald Kagan, summing up the result of a detailed discussion of Thukydídês' (alleged) thesis, concurs:

> Our investigation has led to conclude that his [Thukydídês'] judgment is mistaken. We have argued that Athenian power did not grow between 445 and 435, that the imperial appetite of Athens was not insatiable and gave good evidence of being satisfied, that the Spartans as a state seem not to have been unduly afraid of the Athenians, at least until the crisis had developed very far, . . . and thus that it was not the underlying causes but the immediate crisis that produced the war.[342]

This outright dismissal of the *alêthestátê próphasis* leaves one uneasy, too. Almost everything we know about the events in question we know from Thukydídês. The notion that we are better able to judge the evidence than Thukydídês himself seems a little bold. So if the idea that Thukydídês was referring to the growing power of the Athenians does not work out, could he not have meant something else? What *is* the key variable here? Most European translators of Thukydídês, from Thomas Hobbes onwards, employ the word 'power' in rendering the famous phrase in 1.23.[343] But in the original the word *dýnamis* 'power' that Thukydídês routinely uses elsewhere does not occur. Instead, Thukydídês describes the Athenians as, literally, 'becoming great', *megáloi gignómenoi*—idiomatic English would require 'growing great', but the dynamic element that the idea of growing implies is not in fact present in the Greek. Like its English equivalent 'great', the Greek adjective has many shades of meaning (including, in the Greek case, 'powerful', but also 'proud, overbearing'), and no doubt Thukydídês in selecting this word to describe the Athenians thought that all or most of them applied. Nevertheless, for simplicity's sake let us assume that the Athenians having gained more power than they possessed previously really is the main import of the phrase.

What exactly is Thukydídês saying: *Tên men gar alêthestátên próphasin . . . tous Athênaíous hêgoúmai megálous gignoménous kai phóbon paréchontas tois Lakedaimoníois anankásai es to polemeín.* Rendering this formulation in the manner most faithful to its semantic subtleties that I am able gives me this sentence in English: 'For the truest cause [of the war] . . . I hold to be the Athenians, who, achieving greatness and giving the Lakedamonians cause for worry, left no other option but war'. We are told four things here.

Firstly, it is 'the Athenians doing something' who, in the eyes of Thukydídês, represent the 'truest cause' of the war. Indeed the phrase begins literally: 'For the truest cause I

[340] Gilpin (1991: 32).

[341] Lebow (1991: 127–8).

[342] Kagan (1969: 345–6).

[343] e.g. Annibaletto (1981: 18); Braun (1961: 21); Cagnetta et al. (1996: 31); Donini (1982: i 125); Ferrari (1985: 111); Heilmann ([1764] 1912: 19); Hobbes ([1628] 1989: 15); Osiander (1827: 28); Warner (1972: 37). The translations that in this and the following note are indicated by the names of the translators are found under 'Thukydídês' in the References.

hold to be the Athenians,' where moreover in the Greek the *hêgoúmai* 'I consider, I hold' is, quasi-parenthetically and marking a kind of pause in the sentence, placed *after* its object *tous Athênaíous* 'the Athenians' (accusative), giving that object still more prominence. It is *the Athenians* who are the cause of the war.[344] Secondly, we are told that it is the Athenians 'achieving greatness', and, thirdly, 'giving the Lakedaimonians cause for worry', who are the cause; fourthly and finally, we are told *how* the Athenians are the cause: they 'left no other option but war'. Literally, Thukydídês is saying that they 'forced into the waging of war', a construction that unfortunately in English is not possible (it does work in German, which like Greek can turn an infinitive into a noun: *sie zwangen zum Kriegführen*). Rex Warner has 'what made war inevitable was the growth of Athenian power', but this sounds too impersonal, like a preordained fate that just happened to happen. Thukydídês' point is that the Athenians, as people and actively, did something to bring about the war. Note that Thukydídês does not say *whom* they forced to make war.

The phrase contains two present participles connected by *kai* 'and': the Athenians are described as 'achieving greatness *and* giving the Lakedaimonians cause for worry'. We tend to read this as two sides of the same coin. Commentators on Thukydídês are, for once, in agreement that the worry of the Lakedaimonians was the direct and automatic result of the growing 'power' (of which Thukydídês himself, as noted, does not actually speak here) of the Athenians. For those who do not read the Greek original, that decision is actually often preempted by the translators. Most translators 'improve' on the Greek text by turning the merely additive link into an explicitly causal one, usually by means of relative clauses replacing the original participles. Thomas Hobbes is a typical example: in his rendering the *alêthestátê próphasis* becomes 'the growth of the Athenian power, *which* putting the Lacedaemonians into fear necessitated the war' (my emphasis).[345] As in Warner, so in Hobbes it is not the Athenians as people who are at the origin of the war, but an impersonal factor, the growth of their power; and whereas Thukydídês places the greatness (not power) of the Athenians and the fear of the Lakedaimonians side by side without either specifying the nature of the link or establishing a hierarchy, in Hobbes the fear of the Lakedaimonians becomes a corollary of the power of the Athenians. Warner himself is exceptional in retaining Thukydídês' simple, semantically neutral *kai*: 'the growth of Athenian power *and* the fear which this caused in Sparta'—but of course the 'this', which he adds to the Greek text, establishes the causal connection anyway.

The assumption now so universally taken for granted that the Lakedaimonians were afraid of the power, as such, of the Athenians of course presupposes that Thukydídês believed in the balance of power as a self-evident principle—in which case he would, as far as I can see, have been the only one to do so in the entire Graeco-Roman world. But did he? The immediate objection must be that in his original text the Lakedaimonians do not fear the power of the Athenians but the Athenians themselves. As to the two participles, there clearly *is* a link between them, but Thukydídês' wording with its simple connective 'and' does not make it explicit. I submit that for Thukydídês the mere fact of the Athenians achieving greatness, or indeed greater power, was *not* in itself enough to worry the Lakedaimonians. It is important for explaining the outbreak of war

[344] The strong emphasis placed, by means of the word order, on 'the Athenians' as the subject of the verb *anankásai* (even as they are the object of *hêgoúmai*) is underlined by Raphael Sealey (1975: 92).

[345] Thukydídês ([1628] 1989: 15).

only because the Athenians *in addition* (*kai* 'and') give the Lakedaimonians cause for worry.

The position of leadership that accrued to the Athenians as a result of their role as defenders of Greece against the Persian threat was transformed by them into coercive rule over their allies, held in subjection—an unprecedented phenomenon in the Greek world at least on the supralocal scale on which the Athenians practised it. The protection money that they forced their allies to pay to them was invested in their fleet, enabling them to build up seemingly unchallengeable sea power. How the allies experienced the power of the Athenians is important for explaining the outbreak of the great war. Having set forth the *aitíai kai diaphoraí*, the crisis immediately preceding that outbreak, Thukydídês follows up with a lengthy retrospective of the events of the preceding 'fifty years' (*pentêkonta étê*), the so-called *pentêkontaetía* (1.88–118). Clearly referring back to 1.23, it begins thus:

> The Lakedaimonians voted that the treaty [the thirty-year peace of 446] was no longer valid and that war should be waged, not so much convinced by the arguments of their allies as out of fear of the Athenians, that they might gain still more power, seeing as they did that the greater part of Greece was already subject to them.[346]

Surely this is a clear case of balance-of-power thinking? But let us pay attention to the context. There is no suggestion here that the Lakedaimonians had long viewed the power balance, the supposedly growing power of the Athenians with concern. Indeed, in this passage power literally takes second place: whereas in 1.23, the greatness of the Athenians is listed before the fear of the Lakedaimonians, here it is the other way around. That the order does not matter is a further indication that the two participles have equal weight. Not untypically for Thukydídês, the formulation is somewhat forced, almost ungrammatical. He could have written, with unremarkable grammatical correctness *phoboúmenoi mê hoi Athênaíoi epí meízon dynêthôsin* 'being afraid that the Athenians might gain still more power'. Instead he writes *phoboúmenoi tous Athenaíous mê epí meízon dynêthôsin*, 'being afraid of the Athenians, that they might gain still more power'. The nuance is obvious: in the phrasing chosen by Thukydídês (and the slight offence against ordinary grammar and fluent style must be the result of a deliberate choice) the Athenians are emphasized as the primary object of the fear of the Lakedaimonians, *before* the increase of their power and separately from it. Clearly Thukydídês' point is not that the Lakedaimonians fear the Athenians *because* the Athenians are disturbing the balance of power, or put differently, that looking at the power balance is cause for fear. It is precisely the opposite: the Lakedaimonians are concerned about their relative power *because* the Athenians give them cause for fear.

It is not their power alone that turns the Athenians into a threat, it is the way they use it: without consideration for the interests of the Lakedaimonians, whose allies (Corinth, Mégara) they treat so humiliatingly that the Lakedaimonians risk losing their position as *hêgemṓn* of the Peloponnesians. It is precisely this, the current crisis, that Thukydídês has just described at length. By contrast, his text contains not the slightest hint or allusion to any competition for power or influence between Lakedaímôn and Athens; that is exclusively a projection of his commentators. Let us put ourselves in the shoes of the Lakedaimonians. The conflict between Corinth and Kérkyra has just driven the latter

[346] Thukydídês 1.88.

into the arms of the Athenians, complete with its important fleet; this is a result of the tendency towards bipolarization of the *pólis*-world that Thukydídês (1.18) underlines. Kérkyra is not 'subject' to the Athenians, yet it is not really free any more, either, and everybody knows how the Athenians treat their so-called allies. Or if anyone does not, having been born too late, he or she will learn from the *pentêkontaetía*, immediately following. Conversely, Corinth has threatened the Lakedaimonians with defection if they fail to go to war with Athens.

The Lakedaimonians thus find themselves in a situation where the decision not to go to war can only strengthen the Athenians while weakening the Lakedaimonians themselves—greatly and suddenly if Corinth implements its threat. This newly arisen situation is the problem in 1.88. To today's readers it may appear immediately plausible that the Lakedaimonians wish to prevent a loss of relative power at any price. But since Thukydídês did *not* think in terms of power alone, he felt that more explanation was required. For him and his contemporaries, it would not be worrying that the Athenians gained power were it not for the fact that they would likely use it aggressively. But this is precisely the expectation that the experience of the last fifty years must create.

I suspect that Thukydídês' contemporaries understood the passage differently from today's readers already because of the word 'subject' (*hypocheírios*). For today's readers, lust for power, the attempt to extend one's sphere of influence even or in particular by coercive means is normal, unsurprising. But for the contemporaries, the empire of the Athenians, an empire *by Greeks over Greeks*, was unprecedented and scandalous. We saw how forcefully coercive rule was rejected in the *pólis*-world, and how this can be documented not least from Thukydídês' text itself (Section 2.2.1.5, Subsection 'The fourth-century *pólis*-world'). 'The greater part of Greece subject' to the Athenians? It seems to me that commentators have overlooked the moral paradox here, an implicit value judgement attributed by Thukydídês to the Lakedaimonians: Greeks were not normally subject to each other, so the large-scale subjection practised by the Athenians gave them cause for worry indeed. (True, the heilots held in subjection by the Lakedaimonians were also Greeks, but even apart from the fact that this was, so to speak, sanctioned by tradition and not any longer a mark of expansionism or foreign-political aggressiveness on the part of the Lakedaimonians that consideration of course did not lessen the danger emanating from the Athenians.)

Thukydídês probably composed the narration of the *aitíai kai diaphoraí* soon after the actual events (cf. 1.1); it is widely agreed that the *pentêkontaetía* was written considerably later. The final phrase of 1.23 about the *alêthestátê próphasis*, which gives the impression of having been appended to a pre-existing text, may well have been added at the same time. A likely explanation is that the contemporaries of the crisis of the late 430s were dying. Those born later were unfamiliar with the antecedents of the war, which however provided the background necessary for understanding why the Lakedaimonians in 431 did not trust the Athenians one more time, did not accept arbitration as provided by the 446 treaty. Their experience with the Athenians, now recounted in the *pentêkontaetía*, militated against it. There is no antithesis between the *aitíai kai diaphoraí* on the one hand and the *alêthestátê próphasis* and the *pentêkontaetía* on the other. Both deal with the fear of the Lakedaimonians, a fear that has something to do with the power of the Athenians without that power being its prime or sole cause.

On the whole, the *pentêkontaetía* is a mere summary of events without much analysis and devoid of speeches, similar in that respect to Book Eight of the work, which

breaks off in mid-sentence; the *pentêkontaetía* is thus probably unfinished, too. For A. W. Gomme, it is only a first draft. Simon Hornblower concurs and remarks that given its character as an incomplete later addition it is no wonder if it does not fit in entirely coherently with the rest of the narrative.[347] But even if what we have is just a sketch, it does present an image, and that looks so little like a portrayal of growing power that the intention must have been a different one. It seems to me that, contrary to the conventional view, the *pentêkontaetía* was never meant to show how the power of the Athenians grew. It is more concerned with the other of the two participles: the antecedents of the war are important not so much to show how Athens became powerful but how Lakedaímôn came to worry about Athens.

The power or 'greatness' of Athens was simply the result of the Persian defeat and the subsequent maritime dominion of the Athenians, which enabled them to force their allies into submission. Immediately following the passage just quoted Thukydídês continues: 'For the Athenians came in this manner into the circumstances in which they grew.'[348] Note the construction. First the circumstances (*ta prágmata*) change, *then* the Athenians grow: the circumstances themselves are not enough to account for the new Athens, they are perhaps a necessary, but clearly not a sufficient condition. What I think is meant here is that the Athenians were under no obligation to turn leadership into oppression.

Except at the beginning and the end (more on this in a moment), the word *dýnamis* 'power' occurs only one more time in the *pentêkontaetía* (nor does it contain any further derivative like *dynêthṓsin* in 1.88). Themistoklḗs urges the Athenians to finish a wall, begun years earlier at his initiative, around the port of Peiraieús, on the grounds that this would 'contribute much to their acquiring power, now that they had become seafarers'.[349] The power of the Athenians rested on their fleet—which, as Thukydídês also expressly notes here, had come into being largely thanks to Themistoklḗs. Fortifying the port to prevent a future foe from destroying the ships at harbour was indispensable for securing the naval dominion of the Athenians, and thus for everything that resulted from it, such as the empire. Thukydídês places the quotation in the context of the construction of a new great wall for Athens itself immediately after the Persian sack of the city in 479. The Lakedaimonians intervened, trying to dissuade the Athenians—to whom they were still allied—from building this new city wall. According to Thukydídês, they did so less because they were alarmed themselves but 'mostly because the allies were pushing them, fearing as they did the size of the Athenian fleet, which did not exist before, and the daring shown in the Medic [Persian] war'. (In the Greek, from a purely grammatical point of view the phrase 'which did not exist before' would normally be taken to refer to 'size' not 'fleet', though the latter is possible. It is also typical for Thukydídês' eliptic language not to spell out *whose* daring he is talking about.)[350]

It is clear from this that both Athenian resources and Athenian behaviour were viewed with suspicion *from the very beginning*—with reason, as Thukydídês goes on to show immediately. While the wall was being hastily finished, Themistoklḗs went to Lakedaímôn

[347] Gomme (1971: 362); Hornblower (1991: 195).

[348] *Hoi gar Athênaíoi trópôi toiṓide élthon en ta prágmata en hois êuxḗthêsan.* Thukydídês 1.89.

[349] Thukydídês 1.93.

[350] *to de pléon tôn xymmáchôn exotrynóntôn kai phobouménôn tou te nautikoú autṓn to plḗthos, ho prin ouch hypḗrche, kai tên es ton Mêdikón pólemon tólman genoménên.* Thukydídês 1.90.

and played for time by claiming that he could say nothing officially until the rest of the delegation that he was supposedly heading had arrived. When the Lakedaimonians kept receiving information that construction of the wall continued, Themistoklḗs denied that, encouraged the Lakedaimonians to send a delegation of their own to see for themselves, had that delegation detained in Athens to make sure that *he* would not be detained in Lakedaímôn, and at last put the cards on the table. Faced with a fait accompli made worse by Athenian deception, the Lakedaimonians nevertheless did nothing—'secretly, it is true, dismayed at having failed in their endeavour.'[351]

When, some years later, the Lakedaimonians fought a heilot rising, the Athenians assisted them in the siege of the mountain stronghold of Ithṓmê. But, to their lasting indignation, they were finally sent home again by the Lakedaimonians. As background to this decision, which the *pentêkontaetía* does not supply, it may be important to know that in Athens itself the assistance given to the Lakedaimonians was controversial. What Thukydídês does say about the decision of the Lakedaimonians is this:

> For when the place kept proving impossible to take by force, the Lakedaimonians began to fear the daring and the unorthodox spirit of the Athenians [*tôn Athênaíôn to tolmêrón kai tên neôteropoiían*], and to view them as being of different stock [*allóphylous*], lest if they stayed they might be persuaded by those inside Ithṓmê to do something unorthodox [*mê . . . ti neôterísôsi*].[352]

The reference to 'different stock' presumably means that the Lakedaimonians suddenly reminded themselves that the Athenians, albeit fellow Greeks, were no Dorians but Ionians[353] and that this was another reason to distrust them. When the Lakedaimonians at last allowed the besieged to leave, the Athenians promptly received them. According to Thukydídês, they did so because they were irritated by the distrust shown them by the Lakedaimonians. At the same time, however, from the perspective of the Lakedaimonians their behaviour no doubt proved that distrust to have been justified.

Elsewhere, too, the Athenians were busy acquiring enemies. Thus they entered into an alliance with Mégara, embroiled in a war against its neighbour Corinth (despite both *póleis* having an alliance with Lakedaímôn). The Athenians equipped Mégara with new fortifications and a garrison. 'Not least because of this, the vehement hatred of the Corinthians for the Athenians began to develop.'[354] Corinth and Athens repeatedly clashed militarily. In general, it seems that the Athenians left out no opportunity for war, without always being victorious. At the same time they had to deal with continual attempts at secession by their allies, despite or because of the harsh treatment meted out to those allies. 'For the Athenians acted with rigour, and, by applying compulsion, caused offence to people not accustomed or willing to suffer hardship.'[355]

As punishment for attempted secession, the Athenians sell the inhabitants of Chairóneia into slavery, and expel the inhabitants of Hestíaia on the island of Eúboia to resettle the place themselves.[356] Thukydídês reports this so briefly, without any comment, that readers unfamiliar with the period can hardly be blamed for missing the enormity

[351] Thukydídês 1.92.

[352] Thukydídês 1.102. The construction of this sentence, somewhat ungrammatical and disjointed as it is, closely follows the Greek original.

[353] Cf. Thukydídês 6.82.

[354] Thukydídês 1.103.

[355] Thukydídês 1.99.

[356] Thukydídês 1.113–14.

of such behaviour in the eyes of the contemporaries. But Greeks were not supposed to treat Greeks like that. The only successful secession is that of Mégara, which needless to say does not endear it to the Athenians. As described earlier, the great war of 431 was ignited by friction between Corinth and Athens on the one hand, Mégara and Athens on the other.

What we learn from the *pentêkontaetía* is essentially this: the Athenians are, consistently and from the beginning, viewed with distrust and indeed dislike. What the *pentêkontaetía* expresses time and again, and what, contrary to the power of Athens, it repeatedly refers to explicitly, is the 'daring', the 'unorthodox spirit' of the Athenians, their aggressiveness, and in reaction to that dismay, suspicion, the feeling that the Athenians are capable of anything. There is no dynamic element here. The situation is not getting better or worse, but seems to be basically constant throughout the famous fifty years. The *pentêkontaetía* is not concerned with power so much as with emotion: indignation and fear.

When the war of 431 begins, people are quick to take sides:

> Popular sentiment was strongly in favour of the Lakedaimonians, especially as they declared that they were liberating Greece. Every individual and every *pólis* was desirous to assist them as much as possible in word and deed, and each believed that the cause would suffer if he himself was not there to help it. Such was the anger that most people directed at the Athenians, some seeking to shake off rule, others fearing to come under it.[357]

I contend that it is this which the *pentêkontaetía* was intended to explain, rather than document a shift in the power balance of Greece. The key words in the last sentence quoted are anger, fear, and rule—not power. In translating that sentence I have deliberately written 'rule' and not 'their rule', as others are quite unanimous in doing ('their' or 'its/her', as the 'Athenians' of the original are often turned into 'Athens' by the translators). Thukydídês could have written *tês autôn archês* 'from *their* rule' instead of the simple *tês archês* that we find in the text, just as he could have written *mê hyp'autôn archthôsi phoboúmenoi* 'fearing to be ruled *by them*' instead of *mê archthôsi phoboúmenoi* 'fearing to be ruled'. Of course, we *are* concretely talking about the rule of the Athenians; there is no need to spell that out. But then why do the translators? The fact that Thukydídês speaks of rule in the abstract, and not concretely of the rule of the Athenians, may have a semantic significance beyond the desire for concision. It was the fact of rule as such (quite independently of who happened to be exercising it) that the contemporaries perceived not just as irksome or threatening but also as scandalous. The participles appended to the principal clause ('some seeking . . . others fearing') have a causal sense, giving the reason for what the principal clause tells us. Note that 'rule' is the most neutral rendering; 'dominion' or 'empire' would be equally possible.

The *pentêkontaetía* finishes thus:

> All this now that the Greeks did to each other and to the Barbarian [Persian] happened in the fifty years or so between the retreat of Xérxês [480] and the beginning of this war [431]. In those years, the Athenians consolidated the rule [or: the empire] and came to possess great power themselves. The Lakedaimonians noted this but did nothing about it, except intermittently [or/and: half-heartedly; e.g. their protest against the new city wall of Athens]. Most of the time

[357] Thukydídês 2.8.

they kept their peace. Previously, too, they had not been quick to go to war unless forced to, and they were also somewhat hindered by domestic wars [e.g., the heilot rising of the 460s—I am not sure if we know of further instances]. But at last the power of the Athenians began clearly to rise [or: exalt itself] and the Athenians were laying hands upon their alliance. At that point their tolerance was exhausted, and they decided that it was necessary to attack without holding back and to destroy the strength if they could, by engaging in this war.[358]

Again this passage may at first sight be compatible with balance-of-power thinking. Certainly most translators jump to the conclusion that the balance of power is the main issue here, with the result that they use the leeway that translators invariably have to reinforce that very impression; indeed it is fair to say that some stretch the passage beyond what could still be considered permissible.

Once again the pronouns, both present and missing, are interesting here. Again we read: 'the Athenians consolidated [literally: rendered firmer or stronger] *the* rule'. It is legitimate to render this as 'their rule' here, as the mere 'the' sounds strange in English. Significantly, that is less true if we render *archḗ* as 'empire'—indicating that, like 'empire', the Greek term connoted something sufficiently unusual to exclude ambiguity as to whose *archḗ* was being talked about. Conversely, the remainder of the sentence features a word that, given Thukydídês' tendency to omit pronouns where possible, stands out the more starkly: *kai autoí epí méga echôrêsan dynámeôs*, 'and came to possess great power *themselves*'. The *autoí* 'they themselves' is not necessary to form a complete sentence, which could simply have run 'and achieved great power'. Translators have been puzzled by this seeming redundancy, leading some to ignore the *autoí* altogether.[359] Others think that there is a distinction here between the power of the empire and that of the Athenians, among them Rex Warner: 'In these years the Athenians made their empire more and more strong, and greatly added to their own power at home.'[360] The general notion that the *autoí* implies a distinction seems right, but it is hard to see the point of this particular distinction. If in doubt (which a rendering like Warner's must provoke) translators had better stick to the original as closely as possible, as Charles Forster Smith does in his generally excellent translation in the Loeb Classical Library series: 'It was in this period that the Athenians established their rule more firmly and themselves advanced to great power.'[361]

If Warner's distinction seems wrong, can we think of a better one? In fact, the right answer seems obvious enough. Clearly, a parallel is implied here between the Athenians and someone else who *also* has power. In the given context, this someone can only either be the Lakedaimonians or the Persian king. Since it is the latter who is mentioned immediately before ('the Barbarian', 'Xérxês'), it is evidently Persian power

[358] *taúta de xýmpanta hósa épraxan hoi Héllênes pros te allḗlous kai ton Bárbaron egéneto en étesi pentḗkonta málista metaxý tês de Xérxou anachôrêseôs kai tês archês toúde tou polémou; en hois hoi Athênaíoi tên te archḗn enkratestéran katestḗsanto kai autoí epí méga echôrêsan dynámeôs. hoi de Lakedaimónioi aisthómenoi oúte ekṓlyon ei mê epí brachý, hêsýchazón te to pléon tou chrónou, óntes men kai pro tou mê tacheís iénai es tous polémous, ên mê anankázôntai, to de ti kai polémois oikeíois exeirgómenoi, prin dê hê dýnamis tôn Athênaíôn saphôs ḗi reto kai tês xymmachías autôn hḗptonto. tóte de oukéti anaschetón epoioúnto, all'epicheirêtéa edókei eínai pásêi prothymíai kai kathairetéa hê ischýs, ên dýnôntai, araménois dê tónde ton pólemon.* Thukydídês 1.118.

[359] e.g. L. Canfora et al. (Thukydídês 1996: 139); G. P. Landmann (Thukydídês 1991: 93).

[360] Thukydídês (1972: 103), similarly e.g. Vretska and Rinner (Thukydídês 2000: 88).

[361] Thukydídês (1928–35: i 195).

that Thukydídês has in mind: in exercising rule based on power *the Athenians are imitating the Barbarian*. Once again this is an indication that *archḗ* was associated with oppressive, illegitimate rule. One might even wonder whether the formulation *epí méga echôrêsan dynámeôs* 'they came to possess *great* power' does not recall the title of the Persian Great King (*mégas basileús*).

So what is it that the Lakedaimonians 'noted but did nothing about' (literally: 'noticing did not impede')—even though, Thukydídês is clearly suggesting, they would have had reason to do so? The growth of Athenian power? That, too, no doubt; but again it is not that alone: again we are hearing not just about an increase of power, but about Athenian 'rule' (empire) and aggressive behaviour, and Athenian power is equated with that wielded by the Persian king, the 'Barbarian'. But the Lakedaimonians remain inactive, until Athenian power, literally, 'began to raise itself visibly' or (the verb here can mean either) 'began to rise visibly'. Again it is clear from this that whatever the Lakedaimonians fail to do something about is not just the increase in Athenian power, since we are told that the Lakedaimonians *noted* that which for a long time failed to goad them into action. Do we really want to assume (even though the translators mostly do precisely that) that Thukydídês claims first that the Lakedaimonians remained inactive despite perceiving this increase in power, and then, only a few lines later, that they sprung into action because Athenian power grew *visibly*?

In reality the perception of the Lakedaimonians to which Thukydídês alludes has nothing to do with the evolution of Athenian power in either case. The phrase containing the word 'visibly' once again talks about more than just Athenian power: 'the power of the Athenians began clearly to rise *and the Athenians were laying hands upon their alliance*.' Again, what matters here is how the Athenians use their power, not the fact that they have it. In breach of the 446 treaty, the Athenians allow themselves to become involved in a war with the Corinthians, whereupon the Corinthians threaten to destroy the alliance system of the Lakedaimonians if the latter fail to go to war with Athens. To this is added the treatment of the Megarians, also allied with Lakedaímôn, by the Athenians.

And what in fact is meant here by the phrase 'the power of the Athenians began to rise'? As we saw, what triggered the crisis leading up to the outbreak of the great war was the alliance between Athens and the Kerkyraians, which, by securing the fleet of the latter for Athens, or at any rate keeping it out of reach of the Corinthians, really did modify the distribution of power in favour of the Athenians.[362] More importantly, however, this alliance was precisely the step too far by which the Athenians—already with the naval intervention in favour of the Kerkyraians, then on account of Poteídaia—resort once more to military means against the Peloponnesians. In so doing, they are calling in question the 446 peace, the purpose of which was to prevent precisely this kind of encroachment.

The crucial verb *ḗ*$_i$*reto* could mean simply 'began to rise' and refer to growing material power ('began' because it is in the imperfect tense, which in Greek narrative indicates the onset of a new development). However, as we saw, this would create a contradiction, as Thukydídês would then be saying that the Lakedaimonians first did nothing about this growing power despite noticing it and then did something about it after all because it became noticeable. It is more plausible to assume that Thukydídês intended the

[362]This is pointed out e.g. by Raphael Sealey (1975: 100).

verb to refer to the state of mind of the Athenians rather than their military power per se.

Rex Warner translates 'So finally the point was reached when Athenian strength attained a peak plain for all to see and the Athenians began to encroach upon Sparta's allies.' Sold on the view that Thukydídês is talking simply about the balance of power, already previously Warner has us believe that 'In these years the Athenians made their empire *more and more* strong' (my emphasis)—introducing a dynamic element, a suggestion of power growing *continuously*, that is totally absent from the original. Now he has that development reach a 'peak' which again has no textual basis in the original; his version makes the fact that the Athenians now encroach on the allies of the Lakedaimonians appear like a natural consequence of their growing power. In my rendering of the entire passage given above I have borrowed the sentence 'But at last the power of the Athenians began clearly *to exalt itself* and the Athenians were laying hands upon their alliance' from Charles Forster Smith, who I suspect got it exactly right (I did change 'allies' to 'alliance', since that is what Thukydídês says). What is crucial here is that the exuberant Athenians, by encroaching on the alliance system of the Lakedaimonians, this time misuse their power too drastically to get away with it.

In the final sentence of the passage, one is again irritated by a missing pronoun: 'they decided that it was necessary to attack without holding back and to destroy *the strength* [*hê ischýs*] if they could.' *The* strength? That of the Athenians of course; the translators all amend the phrase accordingly. But why not Thukydídês? A moment ago, he has written *kai tês xymmachías autôn hêptonto*, 'and they (the Athenians) were laying hands upon *their* (the Lakedaimonians') allies.' (In Greek, unlike English, the pronoun can only refer to the Lakedaimonians; if the Athenians' own allies were meant, it would have to have the reflexive form *heautôn*.) Identifying the alliance in question by virtue of the pronoun is necessary, for there are two of them. But if our text is correct, then like *archê* at the beginning of the passage this 'strength' does not need a pronoun because it is unique. For Thukydídês the word *ischýs* was clearly so pregnant with meaning that it could be employed without a pronoun, indeed had a stronger effect without a pronoun. Its prominence is further heightened by its position at the end of a long phrase building up towards it. I have rendered *ischýs* quite colourlessly as 'strength', its basic meaning, because I am not sure what exactly Thukydídês wanted it to express—it seems to be used figuratively, in a poetic sense. Presumably it again connotes things like an overbearing attitude, despotism. What is clear, however, is that the Lakedaimonians see it as something to be destroyed for its own sake—and not because the Lakedaimonians also have it, but, unfortunately, less of it.[363]

The normative content of the passage is further illuminated by the end of Chapter 1.118 (which follows immediately on the passage quoted above, but which constitutes a new paragraph):

By the Lakedaimonians themselves [and not just the allies, who had pushed this argument first] it had been decided that the [446] treaty was now invalid and that the Athenians were in the wrong. Nevertheless they sent to Delphoí and asked the god [Apóllôn] whether it was more

[363] A parallel to this usage of *ischýs* without further qualification is provided by the apostle Paul in Romans 13, where *exousía* 'power' is employed in similar fashion. This is faithfully reflected in the King James version: 'For there is no power but of God .... Whosoever therefore resisteth *the power*, resisteth the ordinance of God .... Wilt thou then not be afraid of *the power*?'

right for them to go to war [the alternative was to consider the treaty still valid and accept the arbitration for which it provided]. The god, it is said, answered them that those making war with all their might would win [equally possible however: answered them that making war with all their might they would win], and he said that he himself would assist them, whether asked to do so or not.

In strictly grammatical terms the reply of the oracle as reproduced by Thukydídês permits both a reading that does not identify the side that will win and one where the Lakedaimonians are told that they will win. However, the book as we have it was revised after the surrender of Athens to the Lakedaimonians, which, although Thukydídês apparently did not live long enough to describe it, he refers to in the extant text (e.g. 5.26). Put differently, readers of the text in the form in which we have it now always knew already which side would win. Moreover, the Athenians themselves did not wait until their defeat to interpret the oracle as being in favour of the Lakedaimonians. According to Thukydídês (2.54), the epidemic that, soon after the outbreak of the war, caused a great many deaths among them was regarded by the Athenians as the divine intervention that the god had announced (in Book One of the *Iliad*, too, Apóllôn sends the Greeks a plague to punish Agamémnôn for insulting his priest).

Knowing all that, it is clear that the oracle, the most influential in the Greek world, was roundly condemning the Athenians—corroborating the impression that the *pentêkontaetía*, which this episode concludes, was meant to be read as an indictment of the moral performance of the Athenians, never as an account of how their material power grew. As noted already, the formulation *epí méga echôrêsan dynámeôs* 'they came to possess great power' implies only that the Athenians achieved great power at some point in time—presumably at the beginning of the half-century under consideration. There is nothing in this formulation to suggest that the Athenians kept growing more powerful throughout that period, or even merely that they were more powerful at the end than at the beginning. This latter notion is derived from the balance-of-power thinking current nowadays and routinely read into the text by translators and other commentators—as something that Thukydídês *must* surely have meant even if he never says so with the clarity that one would like.

(It is true that elsewhere—2.65—he observes about the 'reign' of Periklḗs, which spans the final years preceding the war and the beginning of the war itself, that in peacetime 'he led [the *pólis* of the Athenians] with moderation . . . , and under him it became greatest.' The tone of this sentence, however, does not lend itself to interpreting it as referring to the power balance. The adjective *mégas* may here be employed in the sense of 'grand', but conceivably also in the sense simply of 'big', referring to the number of inhabitants—which is commonly thought to have reached its peak of over 300,000, which until the twentieth century it was never to regain, just prior to the outbreak of the great war.)

Overall, we find that not once does Thukydídês present growing power, or a shift in the distribution of power, as a cause for worry and a motive in foreign-political decision-making in its own right. The regularity with which he emphasizes someone's being afraid—which it would not have been necessary to insist on if, in the thinking of the period, growing power had been a reason for fear in itself—is instructive, as is the way this element of fear is linked with factors presented as a cause of this fear. Tellingly, fear is the constant here, not power. 1.23 links the fear (*phóbos*) of the Lakedaimonians and the

'greatness' of the Athenians. 1.88 links the fear of the Lakedaimonians (*phoboúmenoi*) with both the power of the Athenians and the way they use it (much of Greece having been made 'subject'), 1.90 the fear of the allies of the Lakedaimonians (*phoboúmenoi*) with both the number of ships of the Athenians and their recklessness. 1.102 links the fear of the Lakedaimonians (*deísantes*) with the recklessness and unorthodox spirit of the Athenians, 1.118 links the decision of the Lakedaimonians that enough was enough with 'the power of the Athenians exalting itself' *plus* their 'laying hands upon' the alliance of the Lakedaimonians.

Thukydídês says in 1.88 (quoted earlier) that it was not the representations of their allies that moved the Lakedaimonians to go to war, but their own fear. Presumably, what he means is that the Lakedaimonians were more concerned about their own welfare than that of their allies, or more pointedly: relatively unconcerned for their allies, the Lakedaimonians only get nervous once they themselves are facing a threat. Nevertheless, as Thukydídês himself tells the story, this reaction of the Lakedaimonians is only triggered when the Corinthians take the initiative to put pressure on them. For that reason alone the incendiary speech that, on this occasion, the Corinthians deliver on the subject of the danger posed by the Athenians is important. I have already emphasized the influence of the Corinthians among the Peloponnesians and their self-confident, indeed headstrong behaviour within the alliance (Section 2.2.1.5, Subsection 'The rise of the Athenians and the bipolarization of the *pólis*-world'). Here Thukydídês tells us that it was they who, unable to protect Poteídaia from the Athenians on their own, convened the assembly of the allies to Lakedaímôn, not the Lakedaimonians themselves![364] The Corinthians attack the Lakedaimonians sharply on the grounds that they should have acted before. 'After all, we predicted frequently how the Athenians would bring us harm, but every time you refused to take note of what we were telling you. Among the Greeks you Lakedaimonians are the only ones to keep your peace. Only you keep others at bay not by means of power, but by means of intending [equally possible: deferring] to use it [*ou têi dynámei tiná, allá têi mellḗsei amynómenoi*]. Only you do not undo the growth [or: rise, ascent, *aúxêsis*] of the enemy when it is beginning, but when it is doubling.'[365]

We are hardly talking equilibrism here but about the need to take preventive action in time. The 'growth' that the Corinthians refer to is again surely not simply that of the power of the Athenians, which goes unmentioned. That is significant: the Corinthians are trying to make the most of the threat posed by the Athenians; if the material power of the Athenians had been the major cause of concern to them they would have talked about it. Instead, and in line with everything we have so far encountered in Thukydídês' text, they dwell at length on the character of the Athenians, their daring and aggressiveness. As they put it, the people of Athens are 'reckless beyond their power and audacious beyond common sense [*kai pará dýnamin tolmêtaí kai pará gnṓmên kindyneutaí*] .... so that if, to sum them up, you were to say that they are born to leave in peace neither themselves nor others, you would speak right.'[366]

It is time to deal with another problem that likewise has given rise to endless debate. This is not the place to review that debate and the solutions proposed, some of them fairly bizarre. Let me simply set forth my own interpretation. It fits the general interpretation of

[364] [*hoi Korínthioi*] *parekáloun te euthýs es tên Lakedaímona tous xymmáchous.* Thukydídês 1.67.
[365] Thukydídês 1.68–9.
[366] Thukydídês 1.70.

1.23 proposed here and I think has the merit, in the context of this general interpretation, of simplicity and immediate plausibility. In the part of the famous phrase that I have so far omitted, Thukydídês says that the 'truest cause', *hê alêthestátê próphasis*, was also *aphanestátê lógôi*, literally 'least apparent in speech' or least talked about.

The sentence about the *alêthestátê próphasis* continues: 'but the accusations put forward publicly [*es to phanerón legómenai aitíai*] by both sides, based on which they abandoned the treaty and went to war, were the following.'[367] The parallel word stems underline the antithesis between *aphanestátê lógôi* 'least apparent in speech' and *es to phanerón legómenai* 'put forward publicly'. Commentators find this confusing and extremely hard to explain because the 'power' of the Athenians, or at any rate the threat emanating from them, which are almost universally considered to be what the *próphasis* is about, *are* talked about quite stridently in Thukydídês, indeed more so than the *aitíai*. It is enough to think of the speech of the Corinthians just quoted: Thukydídês has them claim explicitly that they have 'often' (*pollákis*) warned of the threat posed by the Athenians.

The problem arises because today's commentators are fixated on the issue of relative power, which, if we admit that it is alluded to in 1.23 at all, at least in grammatical terms only plays a secondary part in it. Rex Warner (to harp on him yet again) turns both participles (on Athenian 'greatness' and on the fear of the Lakedaimonians) into the cause of the war: 'What made war inevitable was the growth of Athenian power and the fear which this caused in Sparta.' Typically for the twentieth-century perception of 'international' politics, on this reading it is abstract impersonal factors that are responsible for the conflict. That impersonal aspect is heightened still further by rendering *anankásai* as 'made inevitable', which turns a Greek verb expressing action into a formulation suggesting that it did not really matter what anyone did or did not do. This is really the exact opposite of what Thukydídês wrote: as we saw, in the Greek original it is the Athenians who are the grammatical subject of the key phrase as well as responsible for the war.

In my opinion, the essence of the *alêthestátê próphasis* is to be found in the basic structure of the sentence, whereas the two explanatory participles, transformed by most translators into carriers of the main information, are of secondary importance. Such participles normally add some information to the part of the sentence to which they are appended, not for nothing called the main clause—translators would be well advised to respect it as such. If we omit the participles, the core of the statement remains: 'For the truest cause I hold to be the Athenians, who left no other option but war.' As mentioned, this statement sounds less forceful in English than it does in Greek because the crucial construction '(actively) forced into the waging of war', which assigns the Athenians a rather more active role, is not really possible in English.

Grammatically, the key sentence in 1.23 has the Athenians as its subject, but the main clause has no object: *tois Lakêdaimoníois* is the object of *paréchontas*, the second of the two present participles ('giving *the Lakedaimonians* cause for worry'). Most translations again 'amend' the original and turn the Lakedaimonians into the object also of the main clause, letting them, specifically, be impelled into war—e.g. C. F. Smith: 'The truest explanation . . . I believe to have been the growth of the Athenians to greatness, which

[367] *hai d'es to phanerón legómenai aitíai haid'êsan hekatérôn, aph'hôn lýsantes tas spondás es ton pólemon katéstêsan.* Thukydídês 1.23.

brought fear to the Lacedaemonians and forced *them* to war' (my emphasis). Certainly, the Lakedaimonians *are* forced to war in Thukydídês' text. Nevertheless, I think it is preferable to respect Thukydídês' unspecific wording. I believe that his not specifying who was being forced to war is quite intentional: it is not just the Lakedaimonians, but a large part of the *pólis*-world, not least among them the Athenians themselves (cf. the speech of the Corinthians quoted a moment ago, which calls the Athenians 'born to leave in peace neither themselves nor others'). This remains unspoken not only because it cannot be used as an official reason for rejecting the treaty, but because the Athenians hardly admit it even to themselves. Even though Thukydídês attributes to the Athenians the main responsibility for the war, it is also clear from his narrative that they do not bring it about intentionally, in the sense that it is not part of any deliberate strategy that they are pursuing. When it starts, the Athenians have nothing to gain from this war. They allow it to begin because of their careless arrogance, their 'consequences-be-damned' attitude. The war is like a whirlpool into which the parties are sucked and which a more careful navigator would have avoided.

Explaining why the war broke out does not answer the question why the Athenians went on to lose it. In line with the writers cited in Section 2.4, Thukydídês blames the defeat exclusively on factors internal to the *pólis*. They can moreover all be reduced to the common denominator of insufficient virtue, in the sense of fairness, moderation, self-discipline, unity.

Periklḗs, Thukydídês opines in a rare authorial judgement,[368] would have been capable of winning the war started at his urging. He advised a cautious, defensive strategy and would have been able to push it through, since 'he controlled the crowd [*to plḗthos*, i.e. the mass of the citizens] without curtailing their freedom, and was not so much led by them as leading himself.' But soon after the outbreak of war, Periklḗs is dead, a casualty of the epidemic regarded as having been sent by the god, Apóllôn. Lacking Periklḗs' outstanding personality, subsequent leaders of the Athenians were too populist, in the view of Thukydídês: 'striving each to be first, they took to abandoning to the whims of the *dḗmos* [the mass of the citizens] even the [conduct of?] affairs [*etráponto kath'hêdonás tôi dḗmôi kai ta prágmata endidónai*].' A curious phrase: what affairs? Who or what is being implicitly referred to here as having been abandoned to the whims of the mass of the citizens even before? There may be a veiled criticism of the *dêmokratía* here, of which Thukydídês does not appear to have been a great supporter. Clearly what he means is that although technically the citizens of the *dêmokratía* had the last word on everything anyway, they needed strong leaders like Periklḗs to save them from their own excesses—yet those rising to prominence after Periklḗs allowed the *pólis* to go astray from lack of discipline and rectitude. Among them, Thukydídês devotes particular attention to a certain Kléôn, visibly his *bête noire*, at whose instigation the peace offer of the Lakedaimonians of 425 is rejected despite being highly advantageous for the Athenians, and to Alkibiádês, who from personal ambition pushes through the decision to invade Sicily that seals the fate of the Athenians. Presumably it is this kind of overbearing, expansionist behaviour that Periklḗs might have avoided.

Thukydídês is routinely credited with the view that 'international' politics is the realm of rule by the stronger. What is overlooked is that he does not make any such claim in his authorial capacity. In Thukydídês, it is the Athenians, and they alone, who,

[368] Thukydídês 2.65.

to justify their behaviour, invoke this notion—and who go on to suffer utter defeat and ignominy. They invoke the right of the stronger in two key passages. One is the defence of their behaviour offered at Spártê (1.73–78), where, with reference also to the accusations voiced by the Corinthians, they declare that 'it has ever been an established rule that the weaker is kept down by the stronger.'[369] In this speech, the Athenians fail to make any effort to conciliate their adversaries, to de-escalate the crisis. It is true that at the end they demand the current controversy to be submitted to arbitration in accordance with the 446 treaty. But, rather strikingly, they do not deal with that controversy at all, preferring to justify, in general terms, the fact of their rule over fellow Greeks. King Archídamos II of Lakedaímôn advises the Lakedaimonians to keep their cool and recommends arbitration as a way at least of gaining time (1.80–5). But the ephor Sthenelá¡das gives expression to what the majority of the Lakedaimonians (before whose citizens' assembly this debate is taking place) was clearly thinking of the performance of the Athenians:

> I do not know what to make of the many words of the Athenians. They have uttered much approval for themselves, but have not once denied that they are wronging our allies and the Peloponnese [*sic*]. . . . We, however, . . . if we have any sense, will not watch [our allies] being wronged or delay remedying the abuse. They, after all, cannot delay suffering this bad treatment, either. . . . Vote for war, therefore, Lakedaimonians, as is worthy of Spártê. Let not the Athenians become any greater [*mḗte tous Athênaíous eáte meízous gígnesthai*], nor let us betray the allies, but, with the help of the gods, let us march against the wrongdoers.[370]

The motion is carried by a large majority—according to Thukydídês, Sthenelá¡das, in order to make that clear, even arranges for a division instead of the usual vote by acclamation. As is his wont, Thukydídês does not comment on any of this explicitly. However, the attitude of the Athenians, as expressed in the speech that Thukydídês has them make, evidently contributes to the large majority in favour of war. It is characteristic of this attitude of the Athenians not to engage in any debate on right or wrong, and to present their dominance as something that others simply had to accept.

The second of the two key passages is very similar, except that the tone is sharper. This is the exchange with the people of Mḗlos, where the Athenians again invoke the right of the stronger, along with the other arguments that they also put forward at Spártê. As mentioned, the little island *pólis* of Mḗlos was a member of neither alliance, nor had it participated in the war of 431–21. After 421, there were a few years of shaky peace between Athens and Lakedaímôn. During this time, and without any particular reason (at least none that Thukydídês tells us about), the Athenians demand that the Melians submit to them as a tribute-paying member of their empire; failing which, they are told, they will be annihilated. At the very beginning of the dialogue between the two parties, Thukydídês has the Athenians express their general approach in programmatic terms:

> As to ourselves, we shall not make any speech of suspicious length and full of fine phrases, and say that having destroyed the Mede [Persian] we are entitled to rule, or that we come against you because of some wrong done to us. Nor do we believe you to think that you will be persuasive if you say that despite being a colony of the Lakedaimonians you did not participate in any campaign or that you never did us any wrong. Rather, we expect that of the things that you

[369] Thukydídês 1.76 (1928–35: i 129).
[370] Thukydídês 1.86.

and we actually want you wish to achieve that which is possible, knowing as well as we do that in human reasoning that which is just is decided from equal necessity [*en tôi anthrôpeiôi lógôi apó tês ísês anánkês krínetai*: presumably meaning that a morally correct outcome requires that the parties concerned are equally able to exert pressure], while that which is possible is done by the strong and permitted by the weak.[371]

Already in the speech at Spártê the Athenians fail to justify their current behaviour in the face of accusations of being in the wrong. Here, in addition to invoking the right of the stronger, the refusal to engage in any discussion of ethics is made explicit. Not only that: the Athenians even insist that they have no intention of at least being *seen* as acting righteously, or as willing to compromise in any way.

[The Melians.] That we stay quiet and meet you as friends rather than enemies, but without being allied to either side, is not something that you could accept? [The Athenians.] No. Your enmity would harm us less than your friendship, which in the eyes of those subject to rule is a sign of weakness, whereas hatred is a sign of power.[372]

I do not think that Thukydídês here intended to document the Athenians' deep understanding of 'international' politics. He omits to present their behaviour in any kind of favourable light (we should bear in mind that he never tells us anything merely because it took place, but always in order to make something clear, to make a point). Given that the Athenians ultimately pay a terrible price for their behaviour (as the intended readers of his book knew), and given also that the discourse of the Athenians as reproduced by Thukydídês is the exact opposite of the constant invocation of fairness and justice to which the period was accustomed (for an example one need look no further than the speech by Sthenelá¡das just quoted), it has to be assumed that his intention was to provoke indignation in his readers.

It is interesting to compare the speech that Thukydídês later has Eúphêmos, an envoy of the Athenians, make before the citizens of Kamárina (near present-day Santacroce Camerina) in Sicily, a *pólis* that, after the attack of the Athenians on Syracuse, both the Athenians and the Syracusans tried to secure as an ally. First (6.76–80), a representative of the Syracusans accuses the Athenians of 'slavery' (*douleía,* 6.80), which, he warns, will be the fate also of the people of Kamárina if they associated themselves with the Athenians. Moreover, he invokes the kinship of the people of Kamárina and Syracuse—Dorians both—in an appeal for solidarity against the Athenians, qualified as Ionians. In his reply (6.82–7), Eúphêmos shows himself more moderate than the Athenians on Mélos; after all, he has a request to make and is not in a position to give orders. Yet, once again, he employs the same basic arguments that the Athenians had put forward at Spártê and on Mélos.

The right of the stronger is alluded to when Eúphêmos maintains that the rule or empire of the Athenians served to protect them from the rule of the Lakedaimonians, from which according to him they had liberated themselves after the Persian war—'since it was no more appropriate that they should give orders to us than that we should give orders to them, except insofar as they at that time were stronger.'[373] Eúphêmos counters the point made by the Syracusans that it was unrealistic to expect the Athenians to treat the

[371] Thukydídês 5.89.
[372] Thukydídês 5.94–5.
[373] Thukydídês 6.82.

people of Kamárina any better than other members of their alliance by explaining that the Athenians were exclusively guided by what was useful (*to xymphéron*), by expediency. He concedes that some Greeks had indeed been 'enslaved' by the Athenians (he employs that verb, *doulô*, repeatedly), because it had been useful to the Athenians to do so. But to make slaves of the people of Kamárina was not useful to them, since they needed Kamárina as a counterweight to the Syracusans. Kamárina had thus nothing to fear from the Athenians, whereas the Syracusans, as neighbours, were much more dangerous to Kamárina and could never be trusted. According to Eúphêmos, the Athenians did not heed kinship in their treatment of other Greeks. 'For a tyrant, or a *pólis* exercising rule [note the juxtaposition!], nothing is unreasonable if it is useful, and nothing can claim kinship that is not to be trusted; it is necessary to treat each as enemies or as friends as circumstances dictate.'[374]

Assuming that such utterances were really made by Eúphêmos, it cannot have impressed his listeners very favourably to hear the Athenians and their *archê* being described, by their official envoy, as a tyranny that had enslaved fellow Greeks. Once again, the question whether something is right or wrong is, at best, subordinate here. Eúphêmos reiterates (6.83) that the rule of the Athenians is merited because of their role in fighting the Persian threat. But he does so by denying that the Athenians had any intention of vaunting themselves (*kalliepoúmai*) on that account. Indeed he has already presented the *archê* of the Athenians as necessary for their defence against the Lakedaimonians and immediately proceeds to his discussion of the *xymphéron*. It is striking that Thukydídês never lets the Athenians claim that their *archê* was necessary for the continued defence of the Greeks against the Persian empire. Despite the fact that, around 450, the Athenians had made peace with the Great King, it would still have made sense to present the *archê* as an anti-Persian deterrent.

If Thukydídês fails to put this obvious justification of their empire in the mouths of the Athenians, it can hardly be explained other than by his intention to make the Athenians appear unconcerned with acting righteously or even with being seen as doing so. Instead, they are cast as exclusively concerned with their own advantage. This may well have reflected reality in the sense that perhaps not even the Athenians themselves clung to the pretence that their empire, in the form that by then it had taken, served the purpose of ensuring the defence of the Greeks against an outside threat. This would explain why Eúphêmos puts forward the surprising claim that the purpose of the *archê* was to protect Athens from the *Peloponnesians*. With regard to the actual origins of the *archê* that is nonsense—the Lakedaimonians never exercised any rule outside their own territory until after the defeat of the Athenians in 404, nor were the Athenians ever subject to them until then. But against the background of open, long-standing hostility between the two blocs Eúphêmos' suggestion may have carried some plausibility for an audience on the edge of the Greek world that perhaps was not particularly familiar with the history and politics of the Greek mainland.

(It is curious that in the *pentêkontaetía*, having reported that the Athenians took over the leadership of the anti-Persian campaign from the Lakedaimonians because the other allies preferred that, Thukydídês notes that the Athenians then determined which allies should contribute money and which should contribute ships, 'the avowed object [!—*próschêma*] being to avenge themselves for what they had suffered by ravaging the

[374] Thukydídês 6.85.

[Persian] king's territory.' Thukydídês implies that even at the very beginning of their leadership of the alliance the Persian empire was not the real objective of the Athenians—nor, a fortiori, would it have been later on.)[375]

Those who admire Thukydídês for his supposed clearsighted avowal that 'international' politics is characterized by the rule of the stronger should note that not only is it the Athenians alone who are made to say this, but that the result of their doing so is invariably that their interlocutors do the opposite of what the Athenians want. At Spártê, the Lakedaimonians reject the arbitration demanded by the Athenians in favour of war. The people of Kamárina refuse the alliance offered by the Athenians, preferring to stay neutral. The Melians defy the military odds and refuse to submit to the Athenians. As we saw, Isokrátês has Archídamos (III) number the desire not to lose face with one's fellow citizens among the factors of foreign-political success; Thukydídês himself has another commander of the Lakedaimonians, Brasídas, remind his troops that a sense of shame is necessary for success in war.[376] Again, the Athenians stand such thinking on its head when they tell the Melians that it would be ridiculous for them to entertain such considerations: 'Surely you will not let yourselves be guided by a sense of shame, which so often ruins men in ugly, foreseeable danger'—being harmed by an unforeseeable disaster was bad, but being harmed by one that could be seen coming was foolishness (*ánoia*) and thus doubly shameful.[377] (Underlying this seems to be a notion that any kind of adverse fortune was somehow disreputable, perhaps because it was seen as a sign of disfavour with the gods.) The Melians preferred to interpret 'shame' in the more traditional sense in which for example it is understood by Brasídas—whom, by the way, Thukydídês evidently admired. Thukydídês must have intended the dialogue to make clear why the Melians decided not to give in, suggesting that the attitude displayed by the Athenians was calculated by him to be seen as not only perverse but also counterproductive. One may even wonder whether, far from thinking the dialogue gloriously insightful, contemporaries did not feel, as Dionýsios of Halikarnassós did later, that perhaps Thukydídês was laying it on a bit thick.[378]

The Athenians lay siege to the town of Mêlos. The Melians successfully defend themselves for an astonishingly long period and only succumb when someone from their midst betrays them—once again, it is not the military odds that determine the outcome but a question of virtue. 'The Athenians killed all grown males that they captured and sold children and women into slavery. They resettled the place themselves, later sending five hundred colonists there.'[379] This was very much contrary to the 'customs of the Greeks'. The Athenians are not the only ones in Thukydídes to commit such transgressions.[380] But it is the Athenians who appear increasingly to make a habit of them.

[375] Thukydídês 1.96 (1928–35: i 163).

[376] Thukydídês 5.9.

[377] Thukydídês 5.111.

[378] Dionýsios, *Perí tou Thoukydídou charaktêros* 39, 41. According to Dionýsios the dialogue was inherently implausible because Greeks would never have spoken to fellow Greeks like that, but only to barbarians.

[379] Thukydídês 5.116.

[380] See e.g. the treatment of the Corinthians and their allies by the Kerkyraians, Thukydídês 1.29–30, or of captured neutral shipping by the Lakedaimonians, 2.67; the cruel punishment of the Plataians by the Lakedaimonians—3.68—also seems questionable.

In 1.23, Thukydídês maintains that the war that he is narrating was the greatest in the history of the Greeks, not least because of the unprecedented number of Greeks killed or driven from their homes; in this context he notes the practice of wholesale expulsion of the inhabitants of a *pólis*. As mentioned, this occurred even before 431, as did the wholesale selling of defeated inhabitants into slavery (1.113–14, cf. 1.29, 1.55). But after 431, the Athenians resort to such behaviour almost routinely. During the war, they expel the inhabitants of Aígina (431, 2.27), Sóllion (431, 2.30), Poteídaia (430, 2.70), Anaktórion (425, 4.49), Dḗlos (422, 5.1), and Skiṓnê (421, 5.32) as well as those of Hýkkara in Sicily, who were no Greeks (415, 6.62). The people of Aígina, driven out in 431, are offered, by the Lakedaimonians, the town of Thyréa in the Peloponnese to settle in. When, in 424, the Athenians take Thyréa, those of the refugees from Aígina that fall into their hands are taken to Athens, where they are later killed (4.57). In 421, the men of Skiṓnê, guilty of secession from Athens, are killed, whereas in 415 the men of Mḗlos are killed for refusing to submit in the first place.

In all of the instances listed above, Thukydídês tells us what happened with the bare minimum of words. Only the case of Mḗlos is distinguished by means of the famous dialogue. Another exception is the case of the Mytilenaians in 427. They, too, attempt secession and fail; the Athenians vote to punish them in the same fashion as, later, the Melians, by killing the men and selling the women and children. The ship carrying that instruction to Mytilḗnê is already on its way when the Athenians rue their decision: 'on the very next day a certain regret [*métanoiá tis*] overcame them, and the reflection that the decision was cruel and that it was a harsh verdict to destroy an entire *pólis* rather than just the guilty.'[381] The *ekklêsía* reconsiders the matter, and this time Thukydídês takes time to illustrate the debate.

He lets the notorious Kléôn (called here 'the most violent of the citizens', *biaiótatos tôn polítôn*) argue in favour of the existing harsh verdict, and a certain Diódotos against it. Diódotos prevails, if barely. According to him, the death penalty had never deterred anyone from anything. By contrast, rebels against Athens, or those of their fellow citizens who perhaps did not fully support them, would in future be deterred from giving up and surrendering, as the Mytilenaians had done, if they were all going to be killed anyway. Moreover, the dead would not pay tribute to Athens. The original verdict is repealed with a slim majority; a second ship is quickly dispatched and arrives just in time. The explanation that Thukydídês gives for the second ship being faster than the first hints at his own opinion on this matter despite his usual abstention from explicit commentary: the first ship, he says, was in no particular hurry given its 'disgusting' or 'repellent' business (*prágma allókoton*, 3.49). Rather than all the men only 'a little more than a thousand' Mytilenaians are executed 'on the motion of Kléôn' (the number has been doubted, the symbol for 'thirty' looking very similar to that for 'a thousand'). The land of the Mytilenaians is divided up and distributed by lot among citizens of Athens, to whom the previous owners must now pay rent (3.50).

The debate shows how proponents and opponents of brutal measures against those who resisted the Athenians would argue, and that in the initial phase of the great war the more moderate position still had a chance of winning out, albeit with difficulty and on practical rather than ethical, grounds. The dialogue with the Melians shows that twelve years later the attitude of the Athenians had hardened. The Mytilenaians had revolted

[381] Thukydídês 3.36.

against the Athenians, but not the Melians, who had never been part of the Aegean league. The Mytilenaians are 'guilty' not only of secession, but of having offered, in the context of a war between Lakedaímôn and Athens, an alliance to the Lakedaimonians. In 415, Athens and Lakedaímôn are at peace and the Melians have no intention of joining either camp in any case. Unlike the Mytilenaians, the Melians have not provoked the Athenians in any way. Nevertheless, we no longer hear about internal dissent in Athens on how to treat them. Instead, the dialogue shows that the Athenians have become impermeable to reasoned argument.

Why this dialogue? And why at this point? Regarding the precedent of Skiónê, we are merely told that the motion of Kléôn to destroy the place and kill the citizens is adopted (4.122) and that it is implemented (5.32)—a sentence and a half in total. If, by contrast, the bare facts concerning Mélos are augmented by the famous dialogue, this evidently has more to do with Thukydídês wishing once again to make a point than with the intrinsic importance of the affair as such, which in the larger context of the events recorded by Thukydídês was negligible. Thukydídês' book has a strictly chronological structure: he describes the events of the summer of a given year (when most of the campaigning would take place), then those of the following winter, then those of the summer of the next year, and so on. Except for some historical digressions like the *pentêkontaetía*, the narrative stays close to the actual sequence of events. As has often been pointed out, Mélos is presumably given so much prominence because this episode happened to take place just before the decision (once again unprovoked) to attack Syracuse. Clearly, the Athenians are no longer amenable to sound counsel—such as that of Diódotos, telling them to do what they liked as long as it was not stupid. But, worse than a crime, the destruction of Mélos is indeed stupid (to borrow from Talleyrand), exactly the kind of folly from which Diódotos dissuades the Athenians in the case of Mytilénê but of which the people of Mélos warn them in vain (5.98). To document this harsh, blind folly is the task of the dialogue between them and the Athenians.

The attack on Syracuse was intended to be the starting point of the conquest of the whole of Sicily, as Thukydídês (6.6) tells us on his own authority; and thus had rather different dimensions from the attack on Mélos. Whereas that little island probably supported only a few hundred households, the city of Syracuse, occupying an excellent, highly defensible location, was comparable in population size to Athens itself. What Mélos and Syracuse have in common, however, is the fact that in both instances the attack by the Athenians was unprovoked, expansionism for the sake of it. Moreover, according to Thukydídês most Athenians had only vague notions of the geographical extent and population size of Sicily (6.1: this follows immediately on the account of the destruction of Mélos at the end of the Fifth Book). Nikías, whom the Athenians put in charge of the invasion, warns against it. Indeed, Thukydídês has him voice his objections to the enterprise twice (6.9–14, 20–23), as if to make doubly sure that readers understood both how daring it was and that the risks were foreseeable. But, like the Athenians on Mélos, the *ekklêsía* in discussing the matter refuses to heed any call for restraint.

A passion to sail out overcame them all equally: the older men thinking that they would subjugate that against which they sailed, or that great power would not come to grief; those in the prime of their age from a longing for far-off sights and scenes, and confident that they would stay alive; the great warrior mass, that they would make money straight away, as well as gaining additional power that would ensure permanent pay in the future. So that, given the

excessive zeal of the majority, even if someone disagreed he kept quiet, fearing that by opposing the motion he would appear disloyal to the *pólis*.[382]

(I make no attempt to 'amend' the stylistic idiosyncrasies of this famous passage, be they Thukydídês'—as is not implausible—or, possibly, the result of scribal error. For example, unlike what many translators make it say, the text does not have the older men thinking that 'at least' or 'at any rate' 'a' great power was safe from danger. The phrase about 'the great warrior mass'—I follow Charles Forster Smith in taking the word *stratiṓtês* as predicate—lacks a participle of its own, apparently 'borrowing' that of the preceding phrase, '[being] confident'. The expression clearly covers everyone who went on campaign, including the five-digit number of those rowing the triremes, elsewhere—8.72—referred to as 'ship rabble'; they were well remunerated, as is clear for example from 6.31, 7.13. I borrow from Smith the rendering of *kakónous* 'ill-disposed, hostile' as 'disloyal', as well as the phrase 'a longing for far-off sights and scenes', a rendering both ingenious and surprisingly literal, as is often the case with Smith. The sentence beginning 'So that' does appear to stand on its own, incomplete though it is.)

This time the Athenians reap the disaster that they have long been sowing. The audacity of their undertaking is compounded by their fickleness and lack of prudence. They allow the ambitious Alkibiádês to talk them into the invasion and put him in command of it (together with Nikías), only then to become fearful that he might have designs to make himself tyrant of Athens. So they indict him while he is away, causing him to seek refuge with the Lakedaimonians, on whose side he turns into their most dangerous adversary. It is easy for the Peloponnesians to exploit the reckless, self-imposed weakening of the Athenians: tied down far from home, in a highly exposed position and with long, vulnerable supply lines.

Thukydídês' narrative is, at bottom and among other things, a morality tale, a tale of wrongdoers meeting their deserved fate. The final defeat, the surrender of Athens to the Lakedaimonians, Thukydídês apparently did not live to report, although he was alive when it happened. But the failure of the invasion of Sicily, the total rout of the Athenians by the Syracusans and Peloponnesians, from which Athens was not to recover fully, he describes in detail in his Seventh Book. This ends as follows (the complex syntax and semantics are hard to render adequately, but the redundancies are clearly intended to drive home the point that this was a disaster of spectacular magnitude):

> This event [the near-total annihilation of the huge invasion force of the Athenians] turned out to be greatest of all those that happened in this war [Thukydídês treats the hostilities of the years 431–04 as a single war], indeed in my opinion of all those of which we have knowledge in Greek history: both most illustrious for those who conquered and most calamitous for those destroyed. For, beaten totally and utterly, they suffered every hardship, and none lightly. The footsoldiers, the ships, all, without exception, met with utter ruin (to use the common phrase) and perished; and few out of many came home. This is what happened regarding Sicily.[383]

Discussing his method, Thukydídês declares early on in his work that his omission of the 'mythical' or 'fabulous' (*to mythṓdes*) from the narrative might make it less pleasing to read. 'But those wishing to perceive clearly both what happened in the past and

[382] Thukydídês 6.24.
[383] Thukydídês 7.87.

what, in accordance with human nature, will some day happen again in the same fashion or nearly so, if they judge it useful that shall be enough.'[384] He conceived his work, Thukydídês tells us, as *ktêma es aieí*, a possession for all time. It is not least this passage that commentators, more particularly those in IR, regard as confirmation of their belief that 'international' politics, or relations between 'states', are basically similar in every period.

It will have become clear that what Thukydídês had in mind were not the supposedly immutable principles of *Realpolitik* or of IR 'realism'. The notion that in the 'self-help system' of foreign politics morality is a luxury, that actors not prepared to pursue their self-interest even at the expense of morality risk ruin, is no more shared by Thukydídês than by other thinkers of the pre-christian Graeco-Roman world. His basic story is how the Athenians went from the great prestige and influence gained by their heroic resistance to the Persian invasion to creating an empire of their own to being universally hated and, at last, utterly and ignominiously defeated. If, in the process, he lets them crow about how the powerful will get away with anything, that is part of his explanation of why in the end they did not. The passage in 1.22 with its allusion to *to anthrôpinon*, literally 'what is human', or human nature, expresses the suspicion that the Athenians might not be the last to suffer disaster as a result of combining too much power with too little virtue—that, in reality, is Thukydídês' 'take' on power politics.

[384] Thukydídês 1.22.

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3

The universal community of christendom

3.1 The Roman empire transformed

3.1.1 The crisis of the Roman empire after 235

As we saw, in the first and second centuries the Roman empire almost ran itself: the municipalities relieved the central power of most local administration, and raised the money for what was perhaps the most important, and certainly the one really expensive task that fell to the central power, the defence of long borders by means of salaried troops. Problems were bound to arise if the economic health of the municipalities suffered while at the same time the central power needed more money. This is what happened after 235, when the extinction of the dynasty of the Severi inaugurated half a century of continual domestic quarrel in the empire. During this period, the supreme ruler changed about two dozen times. Almost without exception, incumbents met a premature death either by assassination or on military campaigns—against each other, but also against adversaries from outside the empire: 'barbarian' peoples as well as the Sasanian dynasty, which in the 220s replaced the rule of the Parthians in the Middle East. The Sasanian empire was more aggressive against the Roman empire than the Parthians had been; to this aggressiveness, the simultaneous intensification of the 'barbarian' danger may have contributed. 'Barbarian' raids no longer threatened merely the periphery of the empire. For example, in 267, the Germanic Heruls sacked Athens and Corinth. At the same time, the municipalities of the empire were also threatened by the troops of rival claimants to power in the empire itself.

The combination of permanent external threats and continual domestic conflict caused military expenditure to rise beyond what the economy of the period could sustain—not least on account of the tendency of rival claimants to the throne to win over the troops, on whom their success depended, by increasing their pay. As we saw, the economy of the empire was primarily agrarian. The fact that the monetary mass was essentially limited to the coins in circulation meant that it remained proportionally much smaller

than in late-Latin christendom and post-Reformation Europe, where credit was easily available thanks to a supralocal financial system. Unlike what happened after the turn of the second millennium, the limited availability of cash could not be compensated by the central power going into debt. No supralocal banking system existed that could have provided the big loans required. The one means at the disposal of the central power to remedy a desperate shortage of funds was to debase the coinage. In the long term, of course, this only caused inflation and the tendency to hoard 'good' coins or precious metal (Gresham's law: 'bad money chases out good money'), in other words further contraction of the available financial resources and decreasing tax revenue. The monetary economy at last nearly collapsed, causing a return to a barter economy in many places. Even the troops were increasingly remunerated in kind. But they always received money as well. The central power insisted on the payment of taxes at least partly in precious metal—employing coercion where necessary. In other words, it plundered the resources of the municipalities. As a result of the 'barbarian' raids as well as of the encroachments of the central power, many inhabitants of towns and cities left for the countryside. In towns and cities one was a sitting target; scattering over the countryside made people relatively more secure.

Running the municipalities had been the task of the great landowners residing there. Coopted by their peers, they sat in the 'council', the *curia* or *boulê*, and were therefore called councilmen, *decuriones* or *curiales* in Latin, *bouleutaí* or *politeuómenoi* in Greek. It was they—and not representatives of the central power—who were responsible for getting the inhabitants of their municipalities to pay taxes and who forwarded the money to the agents of the central power. Furthermore, much expenditure on behalf of the local community was actually met, at their own initiative, by the *decuriones*, who in this respect competed with each other as well as with external benefactors. For example, they would pay for the construction or renovation of sanctuaries, theatres, baths, and other amenities from their private coffers.

A regional example: in 141, the twin province of Lykía–Pamphylía in southwestern Asia Minor was shaken by an earthquake, which the inscription on the (probable) mausoleum of a local grandee, Opramóas, refers to as 'cosmic', affecting the entire world (*kosmikós seismós*).[1] Although that must be something of an exaggeration, the event did trigger much construction activity, probably intensifying a construction boom already in progress and also evident elsewhere in the second-century empire. Opramóas held the office of lykiarch, that is, he was the elected supreme official of the Lykian league (*to koinón tôn Lykíôn*), a confederation of Lykian towns that continued to exist and indeed expanded after the creation of the Roman province in the year 43. The lykiarch held office for one year only, but incumbents apparently kept the title for life.[2] A prime example of the link between wealth and political position emphasized in Chapter 2, Opramóas treated the catastrophe of 141 as a welcome opportunity to shower the entire region with money. For the rebuilding of Mýra, Opramóas offered 100,000 *denarii*. On the other hand, there were other sponsors, too: the rebuilding of the magnificent theatre of Mýra, largely extant, was in part financed by a certain Iásôn, a lykiarch like Opramóas. He, too, acted as benefactor of the entire region, as shown by his funerary inscription in

[1] I quote this inscription from the edn. by Christina Kokkinia (2000). This quotation from section XIII B lines 3–4.

[2] On the Lykian league, see Jones (1971: 101ff.) and Behrwald (2000).

Kyanéai (the nearest present-day settlement is Kasaba), which like the inscription of Opramóas features the text of honorary decrees by individual Lykian towns as well as by the Lykian league. The ruins of Kyanéai itself have yielded more evidence of his munificence, for example an inscription recording the building of a library by Iásôn.[3] An inscription on the theatre of Patára records its restoration by one of the citizenry, Quintus Velius Titianus—a name indicating that he held Roman citizenship as well. According to this inscription, the project was completed by his daughter Velia Procula, who also arranged for the marble facings and statues (now gone) and dedicated the work to the then ruler Antoninus Pius (in power 138–61).

Evidence for this 'euergetism' (*euergétês*: 'benefactor') by wealthy individuals is practically limitless, and covers everything from great public edifices to glorified knick-knacks. In its way not the least impressive manifestation of the phenomenon under discussion is the horde of second-century CE marble copies of 'classical' Greek statues from Pérgê in Pamphylía (near Antalya). Mostly found in a public bath—for which all of them may have been originally commissioned—they now populate the Archaeological Museum in Antalya, each bearing the highly visible, indeed rather intrusive inscription ΚΛΑΥΔΙΟΣ ΠΕΙΣΩΝ ΑΝΕΘΗΚΕ 'put up by Klaúdios Peísôn' (Claudius Piso, another name proclaiming Roman citizenship—which people like Opramóas or Iásôn, no doubt richer by far, do not appear to have possessed). On the site of the bath alone over thirty such statues have been recovered (some presumably in fragmentary condition). The museum exhibits seventeen—they even decorate the cafeteria, about which, perhaps, Klaúdios would not be unhappy. Clearly, here was someone keen to make an impression with limited funds, to be a player in the league of benefactors.

Honours such as those listed by Opramóas in his inscription appear to have been the object of a veritable competition. The ruler in Rome played the role of a judge awarding prizes, in the shape of documents confirming official recognition of the participants' achievement. The preamble of a resolution by the assembly of the Lykian league puts it thus:

> As the most divine *imperator caesar* Titus Aelius Hadrianus Antoninus *augustus*, the pious [i.e. Antoninus Pius, as today's literature usually refers to him], not only provides the world that is his with an abundance of good men, but also stimulates and encourages the office-holders of the *póleis* to offer their private wealth to [. . . ? the word, a female noun, is lost; the edition used here suggests 'province'] in benevolent and beneficial manner, by benevolently and affably receiving the testimonies sent to him, and replying to them in most gracious fashion, would that such success may also and in particular fall to our community [*éthnos*, i.e. the Lykian league].[4]

The compilation of official documents reproduced by Opramóas on his presumed mausoleum was clearly intended to be exhaustive both as regards their number—seventy have been preserved; it is impossible to determine how many more there may have

[3] Kokkinia (2000: XIII B); Borchhardt (1975: 159). On the funerary monument for Iásôn and other epigraphic material concerning him, see Berling (1993).

[4] *epeí ho theiótatos autokrátôr kaísar Títos Aílios Hadrianós Antôneínos* [*sic*] *sebastós eusebês aphthonían andrôn agathôn paréchei tê*$_i$ *idía*$_i$ *oikouménê*$_i$*, tous árchontas de tôn póleôn epegeírei kai protrépei ta ídia agathá eumenôs kai euergetikôs paréchesthai en tê*$_i$ [*eparcheía*$_i$?]*, en tô*$_i$ *tas apostaleísas ep'autón martyrías eumenôs kai philanthrôpôs apodéchesthai kai tas kállistas hypér autôn pémpein apokríseis, toúto málista eutychoîê kai tô*$_i$ *hemetérô*$_i$ *éthnei.* Kokkinia (2000: XX D). The Lykian league is frequently referred to as an *éthnos* in the epigraphic record.

been—and their contents, where the same formulaic expressions recur endlessly: nothing was omitted. What may strike today's readers (and quite possibly not a few contemporaries) as mind-numbingly boring was capable of arousing considerable passion, with success in the game of awards for civic-mindedness the object of envy and protest. Documents reproduced in the funerary inscription of Iásôn of Kyanéai reveal that a certain Molês caused a great scandal when he filed a complaint with the governor of Lykía and Pamphylía against honours for Iásôn voted by the Lykian league. The matter was sufficiently important to be brought before the ruler in Rome: a rescript by Antoninus Pius rejects the accusations against Iásôn, alas without detailing what they were.[5]

Apart from public edifices and monuments, the local rich also paid for events (the municipalities had endowments for that, but those met only part of the expense: self-respecting *decuriones* topped up those funds from their own money) and for safeguarding the supply of water and food if necessary. Thus, according to his inscription, apart from building work, games, and festivals, Opramóas also financed donations of food in Korýdalla (near present-day Kumluca, next door to Rhodiápolis), one of the towns of the Lykian league.[6] All this ceases in the third century, in Asia Minor as well as practically everywhere else in the empire. Almost all the great edifices in the ruined towns of Lykía and Pamphylía date from the second century. Some date from the first century; very few are older. Practically nothing seems to have been built in the third century, certainly nothing grand. From the fourth century onwards, building activity resumes, but only for two types of structures: churches and fortifications. The rest is at best restored one more time. This situation is also found in many other parts of the empire. The rich withdrew to their often huge estates, where they probably enjoyed a high degree of autarchy. They appear to have maintained the craftsmen they needed, and, owing to their political influence, to have offered protection to sections of the rural population that came to depend on them. At least some of them also appear to have had armed retinues.[7]

Landowners were not exempted from taxation simply because they resided in the countryside. But taxes were harder to collect there, and indirect taxes on consumption or sales also mostly fell on people living in or near the towns. Moreover, tax collection could no longer be left to the municipalities, or other local structures like the Lykian league. As his funerary inscription shows, Opramóas in his capacity as *archiphýlax*—another office of the Lykian league—advanced the entire tax debt of the league and then had himself reimbursed by the league members, not without forgiving some of the debt. This seems to have been expected of holders of this office. However, the league had more than one tax district (*syntéleia*—how many in total seems unclear); individuals less rich than Opramóas could apparently hold office jointly and share the burden.[8] This kind of system was convenient for the central administration, which had to do almost nothing itself. But from the third century onwards it worked badly, if at all. With the rich abandoning the towns, responsibility for the municipalities passed to those more dependent on the towns precisely because they were less rich, lacking vast estates. Now often craftsmen and traders, many of them would not have qualified as *decuriones* before. The central power took to *forcing* them to become members of the *curia*, which included the obligation

[5] Berling (1993: esp. 30–2).
[6] *systêsaménos seitométrion*, Kokkinia (2000: XIX A line 8).
[7] Liebeschuetz (2001: 111–12).
[8] Behrwald (2000: 216–18).

to spend their own money for communal purposes. Moreover, in the fourth century, the revenue of the municipalities from property owned by them and from indirect taxes was transferred to the central power. The municipalities got to keep only a third of the money and were allowed to spend it only for purposes agreed by the central authorities.[9]

Diocletian (in power 284–305), the first Roman ruler in decades to maintain his position for a substantial length of time, reconsolidated and reorganized the empire. He stabilized the economy by reforming the coinage, a reform completed by Constantine I (in power 306–37, sole ruler since 324). Diocletian also raised the number of the provinces from about 38 to 101. Whereas the old provinces were directly answerable to the central power, the new provinces, much smaller, were grouped in so-called dioceses (*dioikêseis/dioeceses*), in turn grouped in prefectures headed each by a *praefectus praetorio*. Under Constantine, the number of provinces attained 117. The creation of this multi-tiered bureaucracy was an attempt by the central power to counteract the decay of local self-administration. Unfortunately, Diocletian, Constantine, and their successors failed to reduce the financial needs of the central power (if in fact they pursued that goal). The size of the army, and hence its cost, continued to grow under Diocletian. Defence of the borders of course remained a paramount objective, but a considerable number of troops now served not to protect the empire but to control it (somewhat, at least—without necessarily being very effective troops did make a certain degree of difference). This new administrative and coercive machinery, bloated by comparison with the empire of the past and expensive in itself, had the paradoxical double task of enforcing the continued functioning of local self-administration (and thereby the payment of taxes) while at the same time seeking to make up for the fact that local self-administration no longer functioned well. Contrary to the old system, legislation for the empire as a whole now became routine. The new laws were detailed, and accompanied by threats of heavy punishment. But that very fact, as well as the observation that similar laws were passed again and again, indicates a low degree of compliance.

From Constantine onwards, Roman rule was also shored up by an increasingly close alliance with the christian church. Spread over the entire empire and reaching people at the grass-roots level in a way that the secular administration could not, the church cooperated with the central power in return for privileges. Thus, under Constantine, christian clergy were exempted both from taxation and from the obligation to serve as *decuriones*—which apparently caused such a run on the priesthood that Constantine was subsequently forced to limit access to it.[10] As a new religion that was nowhere rooted in tradition, but which everywhere competed and clashed with existing faiths, christianity would not have turned into a universal creed without the Roman empire. Intolerant and aggressive (this characterization, which contradicts the perception of the church promoted by itself, may appear polemical; I have justified it elsewhere),[11] christianity depended on proselytizing. Yet by itself it was incapable of winning over more than a fraction of the population in any given location. On the one hand, it relished its minority role, its rejection of the 'world'; on the other, this very minority role compelled it to build up a supralocal organizational network that offered solidarity and support to its adherents.

[9] Liebeschuetz (1992: 7).

[10] Clerics dispensed from obligation to serve in the *curia*: Codex Theodosianus 16.2.1–2 (passed in 313?); 16.2.7 (330); limited by ibid. 16.2.3 (320), 16.2.6 (326).

[11] Osiander (2000).

The creation of such a network was facilitated by the existence of the universal Roman community and the lack of political boundaries in the Mediterranean region.

The church overcame the minority role inherent in its doctrine through the alliance with the central power. This enabled it to harness the means at the disposal of the latter, including its capacity for coercion, for forcible conversion of the remaining population, and ultimately to make christianity the mandatory religion of the empire. The failure of local self-administration since the third century enhanced the value of the church for the central power. Much more than the established creeds, the church knew how to wield sanctions (expulsion from the community, the threat of eternal damnation, remarkably frequent violence by a fanatic mob whipped up by the local clergy),[12] enticements (the solidarity of the christian community, the advancement of careers through the church network, material support for the poor—the latter a factor hard to overestimate), and generally control over the thinking of its adherents. Present even in relatively small municipalities, and increasingly powerful, the local bishop became a key local partner of the central power.

The positive achievement of a certain reconsolidation of the empire was counterbalanced by the fact that the central power remained stuck with full responsibility for the well-being of the population, unable to rely on the spontaneous initiative of autonomous but loyal local actors as before (increasingly, the church stepped in here, though never to the extent of matching the efforts of the *decuriones* of old). A telling manifestation of this development is the fact that public entertainments, such as theatrical performances, circus games, and above all chariot races, which used to be organized and funded locally, from the fifth century onwards were organized and funded centrally. The 'factions' of the chariot races, the 'Blues' and 'Greens', likewise became empire-wide networks, in a manner almost reminiscent of the church. Highly popular and influential (they could play an important role in making or unmaking a ruler), the factions were probably financed from tax revenue—because they served the function of mobilizing the masses in support of the authorities. As Wolfgang Liebeschuetz points out:

> The spectacles had become part of the structure holding the empire together. . . . [They] opened with acclamations of the emperor, and the theatre or hippodrome provided a setting for close contact between the emperor and his capital at Constantinople and between governor and governed in the provinces. . . . What had been celebrations of the city-community became celebrations of the emperor.[13]

Travelling through the empire, from the third century onwards one would probably have met much visible decay. Athens is a good example. It was adorned with splendid new monuments as late as the reign of Hadrian (in power 117–38).[14] By the third century, however, Athens must already have been in crisis, or the catastrophe of 267, when it was sacked by the Heruls, could not have caused such a total collapse. The raiders set many of the monuments on fire, but afterwards the Athenians themselves caused even more destruction. They clearly lacked the will even merely to salvage what

[12] Cf. Osiander (2000); for additional evidence, see e.g. Liebeschuetz (2001: 146–8, 260–5).

[13] Liebeschuetz (2001: ch. 6); quotation at pp. 208–9, 210. On the factions cf. ibid. ch. 8, esp. pp. 277–8. The games came to an end in the massive crisis of the empire caused by the Persian war and the Arab conquest of much of the empire in the 7th cent.

[14] Camp (2001: 199–207).

they could, let alone restore the city to something approaching its former appearance. Damaged monuments were systematically demolished. The only construction activity worth mentioning consisted in the erection of a new city wall, built on the cheap. It incorporated building material and indeed entire sections of abandoned monuments and comprised only one-twelfth of the area enclosed by the existing wall (which essentially was that of the fifth century BCE). This phenomenon of only a small part of the built-up area being fortified is typical of the period. The burnt-out shell of the Parthenón was finally restored in the fourth century, again rather shoddily: terracotta roof tiles replaced the original marble slabs, and building material for this refurbishment was gained by further dismantling of other monuments. The city seems to have recovered somewhat at this time, as shown for example by new and quite wealthy houses on the south slope of the *akrópolis* and the Areopag. Perhaps they were inhabited by teaching staff of the famed academy, the schools of rhetoric and philosophy that ensured that Athens retained some supralocal prominence until the academy, a non-christian institution, was closed down by Justinian in 529, in the course of the enforced christianization of the empire.[15]

The towns did not die, and, as in Athens, may have continued to be inhabited by some relatively wealthy people; but they often lived among ruins. In a letter dating from about 370, a prominent christian, Hieronymus (Saint Jerome), tells the story of a christian woman wrongly accused of adultery, and miraculously saved, in northern Italy. Having greeted his correspondent, Hieronymus begins his story by sketching the location: 'So, Vercellae [now Vercelli] is a city of the Ligurians not far from the foothills of the Alps, *once powerful, now scarcely populated and half-ruined*. When the provincial governor one day paid it the usual official visit . . . ' Half a sentence is enough here to indicate a situation that clearly did not require further explanation, but with which contemporaries would be familiar.[16] Writing around 500, the historian Zósimos blames Constantine for having begun the practice of quartering soldiers in the towns, which according to Zósimos caused many towns to be deserted in his own day. Whether his explanation is correct or not, the observation as such—once again in a single throwaway phrase, as something too ordinary to require elaboration—is telling.[17]

3.1.2 The dissolution of the western empire

In recent literature, the kind of supralocal rule in antiquity that we call 'empire' is often interpreted as rule by a central region over adjacent lands, with the clout of the central power diminishing the further away one moved from the central region. The Roman empire hardly fits this model before the sixth century. Especially between the second and the fifth century there was no central region. Rome was the capital in a formal sense, but the supreme power-holders, who from the second century onwards were usually no longer native to Italy, sojourned there less and less—indeed some of them, like Julian or Valentinian I as early as the fourth century, never set foot in the capital

[15] Camp (2001: 223–38); Gregory (1982: 44–51); Korres (1994: 48).

[16] *Igitur Vercellae Ligurum civitas haud procul a radicibus Alpium sita, olim potens, nunc raro habitatore semiruta. hanc cum ex more consularis inviseret . . .* Hieronymus, *Epistulae* 1 (*Ad Innocentium presbyterum de septies percussa*), 3.1.

[17] Zósimos 2.34 (*tais aneiménais tôn póleôn tên apó tôn stratiôtôn epéthêke lýmên, di'hên êdê pleístai gegónasin érêmoi*). On the evolution of the municipalities in the early christian empire, see Liebeschuetz (1992); for more detail, see Liebeschuetz (2001).

during their reign. Their residences changed, but were often situated on or near the periphery, more particularly the northern borders of the empire. The rationale for this was military: a chief function of the rulers was to keep the 'barbarians' at bay, and it made sense, therefore, not to be too far away from the areas where they operated. Julian came to power at Parisii (Paris), Valentinian established his court at Treveri (Trier). Conversely, at that period it can hardly be said of any part of the empire that it was less Roman than another, or less subject to the central power. The cohesion of the empire resulted from the fact that people identified with it, and its continued existence did not depend on the ability of the central power to control it militarily. This is demonstrated by the near-absence of attempts at secession no matter how bad the crisis of the empire became; local usurpers in the third century—in Gaul, Britain, and Syría—prove rather than contradict this general finding in that they remained isolated and were overcome quite easily. Nobody wanted out of the empire; many people—the 'barbarians'—wanted in: the object of the 'barbarians' usually was to be allowed to settle within the borders of the empire, as indeed more and more of them were.

The pre-christian citizens of Rome were important as conquerors and creators of the system of supralocal rule that bears their name: the 'Roman' empire. But once this empire was established, the fact of being part of it increasingly overlaid pre-existing local and regional identities. By the *constitutio Antoniana* of about 212, almost the entire free male population of the empire was awarded Roman citizenship. Now, everybody (if they were men) was 'Roman' even officially. At the beginning of the fifth century, Paulus Orosius, a native of what is now Portugal and widely travelled in the Mediterranean world, expresses strong attachment to the notion of a civilization unified under Roman auspices and, increasingly, the imposition of a single faith: 'Everywhere is my fatherland [or: "my home city"], everywhere my law and my religion. . . . No matter where I happen to arrive a stranger, and helpless though I may be, I fear no arbitrary violence, a Roman among Romans, a christian among christians, a human being among human beings.'[18]

However, despite or indeed because of this homogenization of the empire, the fact that its eastern half had always been more developed than the west acquired growing importance. The east was more densely populated and more urbanized. It was better able to absorb the continual, and sometimes aggressive, infiltration of the 'barbarians' beyond the borders of the empire without suffering a collapse or a usurpation of its political and military organization. As early as 330, Constantine moved the capital of the empire to Byzántion (Constantinople) in the Greek-speaking east, equipping it with a senate and consuls of its own—until then, only Rome had a senate and consuls. Without stripping the old capital of any privileges, Constantine officially renamed Byzántion Néa Rhṓmê, New Rome; increasingly, it became the real seat of power. This reflects the weight of the east and the declining significance of the western provinces. Precisely because the empire had become so relatively homogeneous, even the eventual loss of the Latin-speaking west did not make it less 'Roman', less itself. If in today's conventional perception the eastern empire ceased at some point to be Roman and became 'Byzantine', its inhabitants right down to the fifteenth century would have been rather bemused by such a suggestion.

[18] *ubique patria, ubique lex et religio mea est. . . . ubicumque ignotus accessero, repentinam vim tamquam destitutus non pertimesco. Inter Romanos . . . Romanus, inter Christianos Christianus, inter homines homo.* Paulus Orosius, *Historiae adversus paganos* 5.2.1, 5.2.5.

Dividing the empire among two or more rulers was a practice begun by Diocletian and not seen as detracting in any way from the unity of the empire. Originally, the idea was to ensure that in the event of an invasion one of the rulers would be quickly at hand. Dividing the empire into a western and an eastern half in 395 was meant to accommodate the co-heirs of Theodosius; again the unity of the empire was formally preserved. In Orosius' formulation of about 415/20 it was *commune imperium divisis tantum sedibus*, a joint empire, only with separate capitals.[19] No more than the eastern rulers did the fifth-century western rulers reside in Rome, preferring Milan, then Ravenna. Personally incapable, increasingly the western rulers were mere figureheads. When, in 455, the dynasty died out, the 'turnover' of western rulers quickened, with the throne already intermittently vacant. Real power lay with high military officials, often German—their ethnic origin being one reason why they could not become supreme rulers themselves.

At the initiative and with the support of Constantinople, in 474 Iulius Nepos was proclaimed *augustus* (one of the titles borne by the supreme rulers) of the western empire. Already in the following year, his general Orestes revolted against him and put his little son Romulus on the throne. This child is conventionally regarded nowadays as the 'last (west-)Roman emperor' and referred to as 'Romulus Augustulus'. In fact this was a taunt, an allusion to his tender age—*augustulus* being the diminutive of *augustus*: 'Romulus the emperorlet'. Moreover, although he could of course hardly help his elevation, he was merely a usurper, and an unsuccessful one, lasting less than a year. Though driven from Rome, Iulius Nepos by no means relinquished his (more legitimate) position, retreating across the Adriatic to Dalmatia. Meanwhile, Orestes quarrelled with Odoacar, a German chief. Odoacar killed Orestes and bundled little Romulus off to a country estate near Naples, where he probably died around 530.[20]

Odoacar himself, we are told by one of his contemporaries, spurned the ('imperial'?) purple. He adopted the appellation 'king' (*rex*), yet did not use 'royal' insignia, either. But the English terminology is misleading: by this time, the old Roman dislike of kingship had given way to a habit of calling the Roman empire precisely that, a *regnum*. The term, which means both 'kingship' and 'kingdom', is the equivalent of Greek *basileía*; as we saw, at least in non-official Greek the supreme rulers of the empire had long been called 'king', *basileús*. On the other hand, fifth- or sixth-century Latin still lacked an equivalent of our term 'imperial' (as distinct from 'royal'), so if we are told that Odoacar failed to use 'royal' insignia the author may have meant what we would call 'imperial'.[21]

Around 500, the historian Málchos writes of a delegation of Roman senators whom Odoacar forced to inform the ruler in Constantinople, Zḗnôn (in power 474–91), that they no longer required a kingship/emperorship of their own (*idía basileía*), and that a single common ruler (here called *autokrátôr*, the equivalent of Latin *imperator*) would henceforth suffice for both 'districts' or parts of the empire (*koinós de apochrḗsei mónos ṓn autokrátôr ep'amphotérois tois pérasi*). The senators were to underline the ability of Odoacar, on account of his experience both in civil and military matters (*politikḗ sýnesis homoú kai máchimos*), to bring order into their affairs (*sṓzein ta par'autoís prágmata*). They were to ask Zḗnôn to bestow on him the dignity of *patricius* and to entrust him with

[19] Paulus Orosius 7.36.1.

[20] Cf. e.g. Marcellinus Comes on the year 476; Iordanes, *Getica* 242.

[21] *nomen regis Odouacar* [*sic*] *adsumpsit, cum tamen nec purpura nec regalibus uteretur insignibus.* Cassiodorus on the year 476, in his chronicle composed in 519.

the administration of Italian affairs (*deísthai tou Zḗnônos patrikíou te autôi aposteílai axían, kai tên tôn Italṓn toútôi epheínai dioikêsin*).[22]

Given the macabre puppetry of which the western emperorship had been the object over the past twenty years, it was not an unreasonable idea on the part of Odoacar to turn directly to Constantinople for legitimation. On the one hand, the rulers on the Bósporos were more than just puppets; on the other hand they were far away. Odoacar would have seen advantage in both: recognition by Constantinople carried weight, and at the same time Constantinople was unlikely to interfere much or exercise tight control. On the Bósporos, ambivalence reigned. According to Málchos, Zḗnôn granted Odoacar the requested title, yet did not drop Nepos. Somewhat confusingly, neither did Odoacar: possibly as the result of some agreement with Zḗnôn he issued coins in Nepos' name. In 480, Nepos was assassinated, apparently at the instigation of his deposed predecessor Glycerius (*augustus* 473–4). Odoacar himself thereupon embarked on a punitive campaign against the perpetrators in Dalmatia.

After Nepos' death, no discernible efforts were made on the Bósporos to create a new western *augustus*. In light of the experience with the last two incumbents sent by Constantinople—Anthemius (*augustus* 467–72) and Nepos, both of them murdered—this is perhaps not surprising. But relations with the *bárbaros* (as Málchos dubs him) in Ravenna, Odoacar, were not cordial. Málchos speaks of two things that Odoacar requested from Constantinople, the *patrikíou axía*, the dignity of *patricius*, and the *tôn Italṓn dioikêsis*, the administration of the affairs of Italy. But subsequently Málchos only says that in a 'royal letter' (*basíleion grámma*: 'royal' here clearly meaning what we would term 'imperial') Zḗnôn addressed Odoacar as *patricius*. This title conferred a rank, not an office; there is no further mention of the administration of Italy that Odoacar had also asked for. Moreover, Odoacar it seems is not called *patricius* in any other sources, or in any inscription—on the contrary, the title is missing where it should appear. It is doubtful therefore if he really had even that 'mere' social distinction.[23]

Constantinople seems deliberately to have provoked a rift with Odoacar. Zḗnôn accused him of conspiring with his rival Íllos (who had started an insurgency against Zḗnôn) and incited one of the Germanic peoples of which Odoacar was the supreme leader, the Rugi, against him. The charge against Odoacar may well have been fabricated. According to a late, but well-informed author, John of Antioch (seventh century), Odoacar in fact rejected the offer of an alliance by Íllos and, when Zḗnôn mobilized the Rugi against him anyway, sent booty of his successful campaign against them to Zḗnôn.[24] While Odoacar had the better of the Rugi, Zḗnôn vanquished Íllos. Zḗnôn thereupon dispatched the leader of the Germanic Ostrogoths, Theoderic, to Italy against Odoacar, along with his tribal following previously settled on the lower Danube.[25] Perhaps in response, Odoacar apparently elevated his son Thela to the rank of *caesar*, a title that could simply refer to the supreme ruler himself, but also to a junior ruler destined to become supreme ruler (*augustus*) later—that was the system established by Diocletian. John of Antioch is the only author to mention this measure, in passing and without

[22] Málchos, Fragment 10, in FHG 4, p. 119.
[23] Wes (1967: 154–5).
[24] John of Antioch, Fragment 214, in FHG 4, pp. 620–1.
[25] Estimates of the number of those Ostrogoths vary greatly (35,000? 100,000? cf. Liebeschuetz 2001: 364 n. 177).

comment. If his account is true, it may reflect a decision by Odoacar to restore a separate western empire after all, given that there was no longer any hope of recognition by Constantinople.[26]

But Theoderic was victorious: Odoacar agreed to share power with him and handed his son over to Theoderic as a hostage.[27] As Odoacar had done, Theoderic sought recognition by Constantinople—though, apparently unlike Odoacar, he specifically sought recognition as king. Theoderic had quite good 'Roman' credentials. He had been raised and educated at the court of Constantinople, he already held the high dignity of *patricius* that Odoacar had asked for, as well as the high military office of *magister militum*, and he was of senatorial rank, having held the consulate in Constantinople in 484. Moreover, he may have felt that, although there was no love lost between him and them, Zḗnôn and his successors owed him: by agreeing to go to Italy with his Ostrogoths he had rid them both of any threat from Odoacar *and*, in an important sense, from himself and his tribal following. Perhaps to drive home the former point, Theoderic killed Odoacar and his family.[28] But the Roman senators that, again like Odoacar, he sent to Constantinople returned empty-handed. It was only in 498 that the president of the Roman senate (*caput senatus*), Festus, finally succeeded in obtaining recognition as king for Theoderic from Constantinople: after years of balking at this request, Anastásios (in power 491–518), who succeeded Zḗnôn on the eastern throne, returned to Theoderic 'all the *ornamenta palatii*, which Odoacar had sent to Constantinople'. The latter remark suggests that the 'ornaments of the palace'—a throne? robes? headgear? other accessories?—must have been insignia of the western *augusti*, whose position Odoacar had declared redundant.[29]

After 480, the empire formally returned to being undivided, just as Odoacar had envisaged. As had been the case before 480, German magnates, like Odoacar and Theoderic, held power in the west, formally on behalf of the official Roman rulers. The difference was that the Roman rulers in question now resided in Constantinople not Ravenna. The legal status of rulers like Odoacar and Theoderic is not entirely clear. But they were evidently not the equivalent of the old western *augusti*. Like Odoacar, Theoderic is not featured on the gold coins (as opposed to medals) issued by him, which instead show the man in power in Constantinople.[30]

3.1.3 Constantinople and the Germanic world

The senatorial elite in Italy—the magnates who sat in the senate of Rome—were unhappy with the demise of the western *augusti*. It was this senatorial elite who had defended the status of Rome against the competition of the new capital on the Bósporos, unsuccessfully encouraging the western rulers to re-establish themselves in Rome. Significantly, Málchos says that Odoacar *forced* (*ênánkase*) his senatorial delegation to declare in Constantinople that the western emperorship had become redundant. To please the senate, Odoacar re-established the office of *caput senatus* or president of the senate and once more gave it the right (last exercised in the third century) to produce its own (copper) coinage. Some

[26] John of Antioch, Fragment 214a, in FHG 5, part 1 p. 29, where a mention of Thela is followed by the phrase *hon Odóakros kaísara apédeixen*.

[27] Thela a hostage: Anonymus Valesianus 2.55.

[28] John of Antioch, Fragment 214a.

[29] Anonymus Valesianus 2.64.

[30] Cf. Wes (1967: 94, 151, 160–1).

of the new coins bear the improbable device ROMA INVICTA, 'invincible Rome'—after the plundering of the city by the Goths in 410 and the Vandals in 455.[31]

The senatorial elite no more cherished the German rule first of Odoacar, then of the Gothic kings, than it cherished Constantinople. On the other hand, the new situation was not entirely disadvantageous to it, and its relationship with both the new German rulers and Constantinople was ambivalent. Constantinople now represented the empire. But attachment to the empire did not necessarily translate into any enthusiasm for being dependent on Constantinople, which continued to be seen as a rival. As it was, in facing the weakly legitimated German rulers in Ravenna the senatorial elite could present itself as having the backing of Constantinople, while inversely it could head off any demands on the part of Constantinople by hiding behind Ravenna. Conscious of the key role of this group, the German rulers cultivated it assiduously.

Odoacar, as mentioned, bestowed favours on it. Theoderic did likewise, even putting in an occasional appearance in Rome, for example on occasion of the termination of the quarrel between two candidates to the papacy in 507. The new pope and the senate came to meet him outside the city and escorted him there; Theoderic in turn visited the senate. In an open-air speech to the populace he promised faithfully to preserve all that the old Roman rulers had ordained (*populo adlocutus se omnia . . . , quod retro principes Romani ordinaverunt, inviolabiliter servaturum promittit*). On occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of (apparently) his elevation to the kingship (523?), he solemnly entered the *palatium* (presumably the old imperial palace on the Palatine hill) and held circus games. He continued the traditional provision of free grain to the people of the city and set aside an annual sum for the upkeep both of the palace and the city walls.[32]

'Our intention', Theoderic proclaimed on another occasion, 'is to build new things, but even more to preserve the old [*propositi quidem nostri est nova construere, sed amplius vetusta servare*].'[33] That was meant literally, but also, whether consciously or not, a metaphor for his role in general: the letter which opens with this sentence tells the people of a certain locality rich in decayed monuments to send columns and other building material to Ravenna, where by being reused it was to regain its former splendour. Such architectural cannibalism had been common ever since the great crisis of the third century, with the old monumental townscapes of the heyday of the *decuriones* largely redundant in a society key aspects of whose social and political organization had changed (we shall return to this). Thus, the well-preserved triumphal arch of Constantine in Rome, built in the early fourth century, is partially made up of reused material—columns and sculpted ornamentation—of far higher quality than the rest, which looks crude. Similarly, practically all the columns of the huge new monuments with which, in the sixth century, Justinian graced Constantinople, such as the Hagía Sophía, are reused, many shipped to Constantinople from places far away.

The letter in question is recorded by Flavius Magnus Aurelius Cassiodorus (∼485–∼580), member of the Roman senate, consul in 514, but also an apologist and important adviser of the Amals, the dynasty of Theoderic, in his *Variae* (short for *Variae epistulae*,

[31] Brown (1971: 131).

[32] Anonymus Valesianus 2.66–7. The passage may in fact refer to a single visit: it has been suggested that 'tricennial' is a wrong reading in the manuscripts for 'decennial'. 507 was somewhat short of a decade from the recognition of Theoderic as king by Anastásios (in 498), but the celebration may have been brought forward.

[33] Cassiodorus, *Variae* 3.9.

'Various letters'). This work is inestimable because it documents how the Gothic kings in Ravenna presented themselves in political discourse: it is made up of official utterances of the Gothic court, whose chancery Cassiodorus oversaw from 507 to 537. It was meant to provide examples of good official style at a time when Latin, along with 'classical' learning in general, was often in decay. Among the documents are letters to the emperor (*princeps*) in Constantinople. In those letters the Ostrogothic rulers invariably present themselves as junior to the emperor, as weaker subordinates seeking protection. Peace is a recurrent theme: the rulers in Ravenna seek to placate the emperor, and to avert attacks on them. Clearly, their relative autonomy was not considered final in Constantinople, and they knew it.

This was true not least of Theoderic himself, the first of the Gothic kings in Ravenna. In Constantinople, Zénôn had considered him a danger because of the possibility that he might take over the apparatus of power in its entirety, as had happened in the west. This might occur by a quick putsch or by the slower method of marrying into the ruling house. Since the boy Theoderic had been educated in Constantinople in the 460s, other members of his people had repeatedly come very close to such a takeover. There was Aspar, the veteran commander who had earned great merit in defending the empire. Like Stilicho in the west, some decades earlier, he knew that he would not be tolerated on the throne himself and instead sought to secure it for his sons, or their heirs, by marrying them to the right women. But he was murdered in 471 along with his sons. Then there was Theoderic Strábôn ('the squint-eyed')—he died in an accident in 481, shortly after launching a surprise attack on Constantinople, which however was fended off.

Zénôn knew very well that a putsch was a real danger, whereas a war launched from a distance could be handled. He was something of an interloper himself, known as 'the Isaurian' because of his ethnic roots in a people in Asia Minor that, although it had not immigrated recently, was itself considered wild and uncivilized, and notorious for its banditry and raids. Zénôn had been playing one Theoderic against the other; once Theoderic Strábôn was dead, it was the more important to get rid of his namesake. Hence the idea to send him against Odoacar, both in order to eliminate the latter *and* to remove Theoderic and his tribal following to the safe distance of Italy. For Theoderic, the offer was likewise attractive. Although capturing the throne of Constantinople was no doubt possible, the undertaking was fraught with danger. Even if it was successful in the short term, the question of legitimacy would have loomed large, as it did for Odoacar. Gothic rule in Constantinople would never have been secure. Conversely, legitimacy might be easier to achieve in the west: both the removal of Odoacar and the removal of the Ostrogothic threat to Constantinople should indebt the eastern rulers to Theoderic and facilitate his recognition.

The historian Prokópios, writing around 540, puts it thus:

> King [!] Zénôn [*Zênôn de basileús*], who knew how to turn a situation to his advantage, encouraged Theoderic to march to Italy, and win the western dominion [*tên hesperían epikrátêsin*] for himself and the Goths by attacking Odoacar. According to him, it was more noble, especially for one who had risen to senatorial rank, to subjugate a usurper [*týrannon*] and rule over Romans and Italians, than to run so great a risk as a decisive fight against the king [i.e. Zénôn himself].[34]

[34]Prokópios of Kaisáreia, *Pólemoi* 5.1.11.

By contrast, the Gothic historian Iordanes, writing soon afterwards, depicts Theoderic as asking Zḗnôn to let him go to Italy to overthrow Odoacar and receive Italy from Zḗnôn, and the latter as reluctant to let him go. But Iordanes also claims—and this is definitely wrong, if tellingly so—that it was after consultation with Zḗnôn (*Zenonem consultu* [*sic*]) that Theoderic replaced both the dress of a private individual and his traditional Gothic garb by the 'royal mantle' (*regius amictus*). Iordanes implies that this (new) kingship was both Gothic and Roman, by saying that Theoderic had become *Gothorum Romanorumque regnator*. The latter word, an agent noun derived from the verb *regno* 'to rule as king', seems to want to say 'king' without saying it.[35]

From Italy, Theoderic himself addressed to the emperor in Constantinople this formal, programmatic message, which Cassiodorus puts at the beginning of the *Variae*:

To the *imperator* Anastasius King Theoderic. It behooves us, most gentle *imperator*, to seek peace [*pax*: the ending or active avoidance of war, etymologically related to *pactum* 'pact'], since everybody knows that we have no reason to be quarrelsome—it being considered a fault of character to be caught unprepared to do what is right. Any kingship, then, must desire peace [*tranquillitas*: the absence of upheaval, such as war], which benefits the peoples [*populi*] and safeguards the interests [*utilitas*] of the nations [*gentes*]. Peace [*tranquillitas*] is the decorous mother of the arts and sciences; peace [*tranquillitas*], by letting the race of mortals grow as one generation replaces the next, augments its faculties and enhances its morals, and if someone is perceived to have sought it but little he stands revealed as being ignorant of these great things. And therefore, given the power and prestige that are yours, most dutiful emperor, it is right that we, who have hitherto benefited from your affection, should seek to be at one with you [*et ideo, piissime principum, potentiae vestrae convenit et honori, ut concordiam vestram quaerere debeamus, cuius adhuc amore proficimus*]. For it is you who are the finest ornament of any kingship, a salutary bulwark for the entire world [*vos enim estis regnorum omnium pulcherrimum decus, vos totius orbis salutare praesidium*—the empire was often implicitly or explicitly equated with the 'world'; cf. the expression *imperium totius orbis* used by Vegetius, quoted supra chapter 2 note 249]. Other rulers by rights look up to you, recognizing in you something that is unique [*quia in vobis singulare aliquid inesse cognoscunt*], but we most of all, who, with god's help, have learned in your commonwealth how we might, in disinterested fashion, wield power over Romans [*qui divino auxilio in re publica vestra didicimus, quemadmodum Romanis aequabiliter imperare possimus*]. Our kingship is an imitation of yours, who are a model of good intentions, the exemplar of the one empire [or perhaps here: 'emperorship'; *regnum nostrum imitatio vestra est, forma boni propositi, unici exemplar imperii*]. To the extent that we follow you, we are ahead of other nations [*gentes*]. Often you exhort me to honour the senate [in Rome, presumably], to embrace willingly the laws of the emperors [*leges principum*], so as to bring unity to all the component parts of Italy [*ut cuncta Italiae membra componam*]. How can you exclude from the imperial peace [*pax augusta*] one whom you do not wish to deviate from your customs? Then also there is that praiseworthy sentiment, love of the city of Rome [*veneranda* (*sic:* even though one is tempted to read *venerandae*) *Romanae urbis affectio*], from which it is not possible to separate those who have joined in the unity of its name [*a qua segregari nequeunt quae se nominis unitate iunxerunt*: i.e. love of the city of Rome must unite all those who continue the old 'Roman' empire]. Hence we have thought it useful to dispatch N. and N. [the names are withheld

[35]Iordanes, *Getica* 290–2, 295. Typically for the period, Iordanes' Latin grammar is often somewhat unorthodox.

by Cassiodorus] as legates to your most august highness [*ad serenissimam pietatem vestram*: literally 'your most serene loyalty' or 'sense of duty'], so that peace in its fullness [*sinceritas pacis*], impaired, as we know, by certain matters that have arisen, might endure [*permaneat*], all tension [*contentiones*] having been removed and its firmness henceforth restored. For we do not believe that you would suffer any discord to remain between the two commonwealths [*res publicae*], of which it is said that under the old emperors [*sub antiquis principibus*] they always were but one body [*unum corpus*]. They should not merely be joined in passive benevolence [*otiosa dilectione*], but by rights each ought also to use its strength to help the other [*verum etiam decet mutuis viribus adiuvari*]. Let the Roman kingdom [i.e. empire] always have one will and one opinion [*Romani regni unum velle, una semper opinio sit*]. Whatever is even in our power to do will add to your fame [*quicquid et nos possumus, vestris praeconiis applicetur*]. Therefore we send you our respectful greeting and humbly request [*quapropter salutationis honorificentiam praeferentes prona mente deposcimus*] you not to suspend the most glorious charity of your mildness [*ne suspendatis mansuetudinis vestrae gloriosissimam caritatem*], which I for one was obliged to put my hope in, impossible though it might appear to grant to another [*quam ego sperare debui, etiamsi aliis non videretur posse concedi*]. All other matters [*cetera*] we have charged those bringing you this letter to put before your highness ['loyalty'], lest this missive grow longer and lest we give the impression of having omitted something to suit our interests [*ut nec epistularis sermo redderetur extensior nec aliquid pro utilitatibus nostris praetermisisse videremur*].[36]

This text, written in the stilted prose prized by contemporaries, is difficult to translate precisely. The language is full of complex semantic nuances, which getting only slightly wrong will make the text sound ridiculous in translation (to the extent that it still does I must take the blame rather than Cassiodorus—on the other hand, for the purpose of analysis the translation has to be as literal as possible). Moreover, there is a lot of subtext, much that is merely insinuated, and fifteen centuries later the allusions are often cryptic. Details contained in the original text may even have been edited out (along with all dates and names) by Cassiodorus when he collected the letters for publication. What is clear immediately, however, is that this is not a communication from one 'sovereign' to another: no 'sovereign equality' here. What is taking place is communication between two autonomous actors who however do not regard each other as equal. At the same time, the exact nature of their relationship is something about which the text is deliberately ambiguous. On the one hand, the king and the emperor are presented as heading two distinct 'commonwealths'. On the other hand, not only is it recalled that previously ('under the old emperors') those commonwealths were actually both two *and* one (two commonwealths forming 'one body'), but the wish is expressed that their union should be very close in future also. Besides, the king notes (and by not protesting accepts) the emperor's insistence that he should apply imperial legislation—the expression 'the laws of the emperors' presumably refers to all the laws passed by any emperors past or present, and collected, by the fifth century, in various more or less official compilations like the *Codex Theodosianus*.

Theoderic is clearly anxious to be accepted as 'Roman'. He reminds the emperor that if he is expected to conform to Roman customs (I suspect that in today's language Cassiodorus would have used the word 'culture'), then it does not make sense to treat

[36]Cassiodorus, *Variae* 1.1.

him as an enemy. He suggests repeatedly that he is entitled to special treatment, being more Roman than some unnamed third party or parties. At the same time, it is just as clear that this keenness to be accepted as Roman is matched by reluctance on the part of the emperor to grant such recognition. Indeed, Theoderic evidently feels threatened. He insists on his readiness to make peace at any time (that surely is the implication of his statement that it would be a character fault to be slow or not very eager to make peace), indeed he insists that peace is not really lost yet, only 'impaired in its fullness'. The letter suggests that Theoderic has in fact been attacked already. At the beginning, he underlines that he has 'no reason to be quarrelsome': put differently, there actually *was* some reason why he might be expected to have taken offence. And at the end, he insists on an obligation on his part not to give up the hope of kind treatment by the emperor, from which it can be deduced that in fact he has been treated less than kindly.

However powerful he might be, concerning the eastern empire Theoderic remained in an awkward position. He could be attacked by it, but he could not attack it himself even in self-defence: that would have cost him what little legitimacy he had, as precious as it was precarious. To be sure, when Cassiodorus put together the *Variae* around 540, against the background of the attempt by the emperor Justinian to crush the Gothic kingdom, one of his objectives may well have been to present that kingdom in the best possible light. Indeed, matters that might be embarrassing for Theoderic (such as his execution of the prominent Roman senators Symmachus and Boethius) or his successors are not touched on in the *Variae*, and if any of the Amals ever addressed the emperor in more assertive language, Cassiodorus may have expurged those documents also. Nevertheless, it would be significant in itself that Cassiodorus should have been anxious to present the Gothic rulers as eager for peace to the point of submissiveness. Moreover, it will be recalled that, according to John of Antioch, when Odoacar had to fend off the Rugi set on him by Anastásios' predecessor Zénôn, he responded by sending the emperor gifts—like a dog licking the hand that strikes him. Finally, the king of the Burgundians Sigismund (reigns 516–23, but co-regent even before) likewise addressed Anastásios in the most submissive manner, in letters composed by bishop Avitus of Vienne that owe nothing to Cassiodorus: 'For my people', Avitus has Sigismund tell Anastásios, 'belongs to you, and it pleases me more to serve you than to lead them. . . . Even though we [meaning the royal family of the Burgundians] appear to govern our race, we hold ourselves to be but your soldiers. . . . Through us as intermediaries you administer lands far away. Our fatherland is your world.'[37]

Very likely, Theoderic's letter was connected with the activities of a certain Chlodovech, one of the plural chiefs of the Franks, a Germanic people inhabiting the Rhineland and what is now Belgium (*Chlodovechus* in the Latin sources: *Chlodwig/Clovis* to German and French historians respectively, *Ludwig* in present-day German, *Louis* in present-day French). In 504, Theoderic embarked on the sole military campaign that, after his installation as king, he fought on his own initiative. Its aim was to evict the Gepids, another Germanic people, this one currently settled in Pannonia (roughly, present-day Hungary)—they had already obstructed the march of the Ostrogoths to Italy, and for Theoderic had no right to occupy (west-)Roman territory. He defeated

[37] *Vester quidem est populus meus, et plus me servire vobis quam illi praeesse delectat. . . . Cumque gentem nostram videamur regere, non aliud nos quam milites vestros credimus. . . . Per nos administratis remotarum spatia regionum, patria nostra vester orbis est.* Avitus, *Epistulae* 93.

them, re-establishing 'Roman' control over the province of Pannonia Secunda including the strategic border town of Sirmium (Sremska Mitrovica in present-day Serbia); but there was also an episode in which troops of Theoderic apparently helped a local chief to defeat an east Roman general sent after him. The sources are obscure about the details, let alone the intentions of those involved.[38] The real objective of Constantinople may have been to deny Theoderic control of Sirmium; if so, the attempt failed.

Fresh from a major war against the Persians and unwilling to upset the situation in the Mediterranean in any drastic way, it seems that Anastásios nevertheless decided to teach Theoderic a lesson, and secured the assistance of Chlodovech for this purpose. Chlodovech had attracted attention when in the late 480s he vanquished Syagrius, a Roman commander who, surrounded by areas already under German control, ran a sort of miniature, leftover 'Roman empire' around Paris and Soissons. This had also brought Chlodovech to the notice of the Goths, whose other main branch, the Visigoths, occupied much of Gaul (as well as much of Spain). In the interest of good-neighbourly relations with this new and clearly formidable player, Theoderic married a sister of Chlodovech. Nonetheless, in 507 Chlodovech attacked: Alaric, king of the Visigoths and son-in-law of Theoderic, was killed, and the Visigoths lost much of the territory that they held north of the Pyrenees. By eliminating the other Frankish chiefs Chlodovech then made himself sole supreme leader of the Franks.

Although he massacred the very Frankish magnates who had recently received baptism along with himself, Constantinople took a benign view of him, the more so as he shrewdly converted to the official church of the empire rather than to the schismatic christianity of the Goths, who were arians. He thereby recommended himself both to his new Gallo-Roman subjects and to Constantinople (which may well have pushed him in this direction in the first place). Indeed, Gregory of Tours—a Gallo-Roman himself—in his *History of the Franks* repeatedly emphasizes the unpopularity of arianism among the *Romani* (as he calls them), the Latin-speaking population of Gaul. He claims that they desired Frankish rule, and that the campaign against the Visigoths was explicitly declared by Chlodovech, that very recent convert, to have religious motives: 'So king Chlodovech said to those with him "I find it hard to bear that those arians [*hi Arriani*] hold part of Gaul. Therefore, with god's help let us go and conquer them and bring the country under our control [*redegamus* (*sic*) *terram in ditione nostra* (*sic*)]."'

According to Gregory, the Franks, when marching against the Goths, were encouraged by Saint Martin of Tours, to whose shrine Chlodovech sent envoys to pray and receive an omen (*auspicium*), which they did. It seems that Chlodovech sought to exploit the prestige of this saint (whose wide appeal is attested by the numerous churches dedicated to him in that period throughout Gaul) to provide legitimacy for himself. The celebration of the Frankish victory over the Goths took place at the great church built over the shrine of Saint Martin just outside the town walls of Tours and of which Gregory gives us the statistics—160 feet long, 60 feet wide, and 45 feet high to the ceiling, that is $53 \times 20 \times 15$ m; 120 columns, 52 windows, and 8 doors: an aisled basilica that must have looked quintessentially Roman.[39] To add still more Roman-ness to the proceedings, help from Constantinople had been arranged. 'So [Chlodovech] received from the *imperator* Anastasius letters-patent of consulship', Gregory informs us, 'and in Saint Martin's

[38]Ennodius, *Panegyricus* 12; Iordanes, *Getica* 300–1; Marcellinus Comes on the year 505.
[39]Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum* 2.14, 2.35, 2.37.

basilica put on a purple tunic and cloak, placing a diadem on his head.' Chlodovech then entered Tours on horseback, throwing 'gold and silver' (coins, no doubt: more precisely, *Roman* coins) to the populace with his own hand—and presumably showing off his insignia: the route led from Saint Martin's church to the *ecclesia civitatis*, the 'town church' or 'citizens' church', evidently the cathedral, at the other end of town from Saint Martin's (though rebuilt, the two churches still occupy the sites that they did then).

The throwing of gold coins (*nómisma chrysoú*) to the populace is also mentioned by Prokópios as part of the (apparently formal) entry that during the reconquest of Italy Belisários, the Roman commander overseeing that effort, made into Syracuse in 536, 'loudly applauded by the army and by the Sicilians'. Belisários on this occasion formally laid down his consulship, which happened to expire on that day. Prokópios describes this coincidence as 'a piece of good fortune beyond the power of words to describe [*kreísson lógou eutýchêma*]', and twice more in the space of just a few lines emphasizes how lucky the timing was. He does not spell out what exactly the good fortune consisted in. Yet although Prokópios provides no further details of how this entry into the city was organized, the point presumably is that the occasion not only marked the end of Belisários' consular tenure in a fitting way, but that his still being consul also entitled him to a grander pageant. Thus he no doubt donned his official consular attire and received the honours reserved for a consul.[40] It would appear, then, that the Frankish leader's formal entry into Tours copied a standard *Roman* model. What Gregory states Chlodovech to have worn was formal *Roman* dress: Franks would not normally put on a *tunica* and *chlamys* (a type of cloak). Einhard, the biographer of a later Frankish king, Charles I (Charlemagne), records that Charles always wore native Frankish dress (*vestitu patrio, id est Francico, utebatur*), which Einhard describes—a main characteristic being trousers; and that Charles, who disliked 'foreign garments' (*indumenta peregrina*), only twice in his life wore 'a long tunic, chlamys, and shoes made after the Roman fashion'. On both occasions, according to Einhard he did so to please the pope.[41]

It is true that only the shoes are specifically called Roman by Einhard, but that is because readers in his day would have recognized the tunic and cloak as Roman without being told: evidently the whole outfit was considered Roman, and is associated by Einhard with a quintessentially Roman personage, the bishop of Rome. Even if Einhard wrote in the early ninth century, it is probable that on any normal day Chlodovech, too, would have worn trousers (well attested in Greek and Roman sculpture and literature as typical of Celts and Germans), and that what he wore on the day described by Gregory was calculated to make him look Roman and impress a Roman crowd. Gregory continues: 'From that day on he was as it were called consul or emperor [*augustus*]. And having left Tours and come to Paris, he installed there a [or: "the"] seat of [implied: his?] kingship'—a somewhat loose rendering but conceivably expressing just what Gregory meant might be 'installed there his royal throne'.[42]

[40] Prokópios, *Pólemoi* 5.18–19 (1968: 47–9).

[41] Einhard, *Vita Caroli Magni* 23.

[42] *Igitur* [*Chlodovechus*] *ab Anastasio imperatore codecillos de consolato accepit, et in basilica beati Martini tunica blattea indutus et clamide, inponens vertice diademam* [*sic*]. *Tunc ascenso equite, aurum argentumque in itinere illo, quod inter portam atrii et eclesiam civitatis est, praesentibus populis manu propria spargens, voluntate benignissima erogavit, et ab ea die tamquam consul aut augustus est vocitatus. Egressus autem a Turonus Parisius* [*sic*] *venit ibique cathedram regni constituit.* Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum* 2.38, quoted after the edn. in MGH SSrM 1.

The event described by Gregory must have taken place around 508 (the chronology is somewhat murky). Unfortunately, there appear to be no other sources to confirm, complement, or correct him, and he himself wrote much later, between 573 and his death in 594. Bishop of Tours himself, at least he knew the topography and the local traditions. He also had access to writers on the earlier history of the region, whom he occasionally quotes. But (typically for the period) his very Latin is shaky and ambiguous. For example, it is not clear whether only the tunic was purple or the cloak, too, and that it was Chlodovech himself who placed the diadem on his head is but the most likely reading of a grammatically impossible phrase. The passage has given rise to much speculation. Were the tunic, cloak, and diadem sent by Anastásios as well? Or the throne (*cathedra*) that Chlodovech then set up at Paris? The nature of the accessories used at Tours seems royal, especially the purple tunic and the diadem. The cloak (*chlamys*) as such, if it was not purple, could have been worn by any official of the empire—but Iordanes speaks of a 'mantle' as an emblem of kingship without mentioning other accessories. The suggestion that all those paraphernalia came from Constantinople is tempting, but Gregory does not say and perhaps did not know. Cassiodorus, it will be recalled, speaks of the purple that Odoacar would not wear, no doubt because he felt that he should not do so without authorization from Constantinople. Iordanes wrongly but tellingly asserts that Theoderic put on the 'royal mantle' *after consulting with the emperor Zênôn*. In fact, Theoderic was only recognized as king by Anastásios, who returned to him the *ornamenta palatii*, evidently meaning insignia of some sort, that Odoacar had sent to Constantinople. The paraphernalia mentioned by Gregory no doubt qualify as *ornamenta palatii*.

Odoacar is routinely called *týrannos/tyrannus* in the sources, with the word here meaning a usurper. This may well be precisely because, despite his deferential gestures towards Constantinople, his *kingship*, which according to Cassiodorus he proclaimed on his own authority, was considered illegitimate—hitherto, Germans, although they might be the power behind the throne, had never yet sat on it, or at any rate on a throne that might somehow be considered Roman. Even if Odoacar 'only' called himself king, and rejected any title or attributes that were clearly 'imperial', no doubt in many Roman eyes he went too far, especially as the terminological distinction between kingship and emperorship was not clear-cut anyway. Theoderic sought to obtain the royal title from Constantinople, failed, usurped it, too, and obtained recognition only belatedly.

It would appear then that kingship, or the kind of kingship that both Odoacar and Theoderic aspired to, was considered as being in the gift of Constantinople. What happened at Tours looks as if this is precisely the gift that Chlodovech received. He is handed some official written communication—*codicilli*: a deed, or letters-patent—from the emperor. Gregory claims that it made Chlodovech a consul; an honorary consulate is routinely suggested. However, it is inconceivable that Anastásios should have created him an *augustus*, that is, emperor: if that title is clearly wrong, there is no reason to assume that Gregory is any more correct to call him consul. The 'as it were' (*tamquam*) indeed seems to express uncertainty on his part. To add to the confusion, in the table of contents at the beginning of the book the chapter in question is marked *De patriciato* [*sic*] *Chlodovechi regis*, whereas the text of the chapter itself does not mention the title *patricius*—although, requested by Odoacar and borne by Theoderic, this would appear to be a very plausible title for Anastásios to have granted. Moreover, elsewhere in Gregory mention is made of a certain Asterius being created a *patricius* by means of imperial

codicilli; [43] king Sigismund of the Burgundians likewise held that title, almost certainly from Anastásios.[44]

In any case, some important new *Roman* dignity was clearly involved, and rightly or wrongly Chlodovech proceeded to consider himself a king by the grace of Constantinople. (That Gregory is so vague on his new status and clearly did not quite grasp the legal significance of the event himself might have something to do with the fact that writing two or three generations later he was accustomed to calling just about anybody a 'king'. Wholly unconcerned with legal considerations, he awards this title to all manner of chiefs and magnates and even—2.27—describes Syagrius as *Romanorum rex*; similarly, he not only calls Chlodovech 'king' from the start but also his father Childeric.) Chlodovech displaying to the townspeople insignia granted by the emperor would have served the purpose of demonstrating to its Roman (Latin-speaking) population that Frankish rule was more legitimate than that of the Visigoths. This was also brought home by the fact that the coronation (as according to Gregory it clearly was) took place in a catholic church and the procession that followed it led to the cathedral, also catholic. As arians, the Visigoths presumably would not have been welcome in either sanctuary; in Ravenna, the arians had their own set of churches, including their own cathedral, paralleling the catholic churches. In Paris, until recently the capital of the Roman Syagrius, Chlodovech built a church dedicated to the apostles to serve as burial place for himself and his wife—in apparent imitation of the church of the Hágioi Apóstoloi in Constantinople, which was the imperial mausoleum.[45]

Chlodovech may also have enjoyed indirect military support from Constantinople. The chronicle of Marcellinus Comes, a civil servant in Constantinople, reports, briefly and cryptically, that in 508 a fleet of 200 ships and 8,000 soldiers was sent by Constantinople to ravage the coasts of Italy; Marcellinus specifically mentions that they attacked Tarentum (now Táranto), in southernmost Italy. 'Returning across the sea they brought back to the emperor Anastasius [*Anastasio caesari*] an immoral victory that, brazen like pirates, Romans had snatched from Romans.' Marcellinus offers no explanation.[46] But it is tempting to suspect a connection with the war between the Goths and the Franks: the east Roman navy may have been deployed to prevent Theoderic from furnishing aid to the Visigoths, by tying down some of his forces (the southern tip of Italy being the opposite direction from where he would have wanted to send them) and perhaps blockading his ports. Theoderic, who after Alaric's death imposed himself as king also on the Visigoths, did campaign against Chlodovech, but was not very successful in pushing him back.

The favour shown to Chlodovech by Anastásios may explain why Theoderic seems to urge the emperor to keep the status granted to himself exclusive: 'to the extent that we follow you, we are ahead of other nations', such as the Franks—we who, unlike this Chlodovech, 'have learned in your commonwealth how we might, in disinterested fashion, wield power over Romans' (whereas Chlodovech was untested in that regard)—we who, unlike Chlodovech, but like the old western *augusti* and from their very palace in Ravenna, watch over the city of Rome itself—we who, as you know, diligently apply

[43] *Asterius codicillis imperialibus patriciatum sortitus* [*est*]; Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum* 2.9. *codicilli* (rather than *codecilli* as in 2.38) is the more correct spelling.

[44] Avitus of Vienne (*Epistulae* 49) refers to Sigismund as *patricius*; bestowal by Anastásios is likely for chronological reasons.

[45] Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum* 2.43; Wolfram (1998: 302).

[46] Marcellinus Comes on the year 508.

the imperial laws. Religion, a weak point for Theoderic, is not mentioned. Tellingly, Theoderic seems to have tried to impede direct contact between king Sigismund of the Burgundians and Anastásios—especially as Sigismund, too, had joined the official church, though up till then the Burgundians, like the Goths, were arians. In another letter to Anastásios composed by Avitus, Sigismund complains that an embassy that he had sent to Constantinople had been intercepted by the *rector Italiae* (the 'ruler' or 'leader of Italy', i.e. Theoderic; the capital of the Burgundians was then Lyon, so Italy was en route to the Bósporos). *rector* not *rex*: I suspect that although Anastásios had made Sigismund a *patricius*, he did not officially consider him a 'king'; for his part, Sigismund presumably saw no reason why he should honour Theoderic with a title not awarded to himself. Sigismund cattily notes that 'it is but a paltry mark of friendship to wish him whom one claims to revere not to be honoured by others: each of us, who look up to you with due reverence, ought to wish for all people to do the same.'[47]

Relations between Theoderic and Constantinople *were* patched up. Even though he might welcome the opportunity to weaken Theoderic and play the Germans against each other, Anastásios for the time being had no plans for ousting him. But Theoderic knew that he had to stay watchful, and over time in fact seems to have grown somewhat paranoid—especially when, in 522 or 523, his son-in-law Eutharic died and no other capable male successor was in sight. Now, the senatorial elite came under pressure. In 524, Theoderic had the philosopher Boethius executed, and in 525 Boethius' father-in-law, the historian Symmachus. Prominent senators, both were accused of subversive activities (*neóotera prágmata* in the phrase of the historian Prokópios, who wrote soon afterwards).[48] The details are murky (with a letter to the emperor allegedly written by Roman senators constituting an important but controversial piece of evidence). Yet it seems likely that in 'Roman' circles in Italy the Gothic regime was indeed still considered illegitimate. The knowledge that the ageing Theoderic had no heir likely to match his abilities must have fomented a certain restlessness. In the year of his death, 526, the king even had pope John I arrested; John died a prisoner.

If we are to believe Iordanes, Theoderic nevertheless maintained his pro-Roman attitude to the end.

> When he had reached old age and knew that he would soon depart this world, he summoned the *comites* ['counts', then a title for high officials] of the Goths and the leaders [*primates*] of his people and made a little child scarce ten years old, Athalaric, the son of his daughter Amalasuintha . . . , king. As if voicing his last will and testament, he commanded them to revere their king, hold dear the senate and people of Rome, and ensure always that, after god, the eastern emperor bore them no grudge and remained well-disposed towards them [*eisque in mandatis ac si testamentali voce denuntians, ut regem colerent, senatum populumque Romanum amarent principemque orientalem placatum semper propitiumque haberent post deum*].[49]

We saw already that Iordanes is not always reliable and prone to idealize the relations between the Goths and Constantinople. One of his main sources for the account quoted

[47] *Parum tamen amicitiae videtur indicium eum, quem te colere adseras, nolle a ceteris honorari: cum omnes, qui vos digno cultu suspicimus, id ipsum a cunctis fieri velle debeamus.* Avitus, *Epistulae* 94.

[48] Prokópios, *Pólemoi* 5.1.31ff.

[49] Iordanes, *Getica* 304.

here was a *Gothic History* composed by none other than Cassiodorus, now lost. The picture painted in the quoted passage fits that conjured up by the *Variae*: the emperor is second in importance and power only to god, and, like god, to be feared; he has to be appeased at almost any cost.

Power in Ravenna passed to the regent Amalasuintha, a daughter of Theoderic and niece of Chlodovech. On behalf of her little son she sent delegates with a letter to the emperor, Iustinus. The letter shows that she intended to honour her father's 'testament':

> I [officially, this is Athalaric speaking] might justly be censored, most gentle emperor, were I to seek your peace [cf. the expression 'the imperial peace' used by Theoderic] but tepidly, which my forebears are well known to have sought so ardently. . . . It is not only the right to wear the purple that gave prominence to my elders; nor does the royal throne exalt as much as your favour, visible far and wide, ennobles.[50]

The letter goes on to ask the emperor to turn a new leaf (*claudantur odia cum sepultis*: 'let enmity be buried with the dead'), and meet with unalloyed benevolence one who after all was innocent of involvement in the affairs of the realm (*qui ad regni causas innocens invenitur*)—evidently, relations with Constantinople had once again been tense when Theoderic died.[51] But if Amalasuintha was determined to conciliate the emperor, other Gothic magnates were unhappy about this pro-Roman attitude. Prokópios reports that she appointed a tutor for Athalaric 'because she wanted to make the boy similar to the Roman rulers with regard to his lifestyle [*ton paída eboúleto tois Rhômaíôn árchousi ta es tên díaitan homótropon katastêsasthai*]'—but the Goths were 'not at all pleased by this [*Góthois de taúta oudamê êreske*]'. The queen gave in; according to Prokópios, she weighed taking refuge in Constantinople, indeed to hand over the kingdom to the emperor Justinian (who had succeeded Iustinus) when she began to distrust even Athalaric himself.[52]

Justinian (in power 527–65) turned out to be a very energetic and ambitious emperor, who embarked on the very enterprise that Theoderic had always dreaded: the reconquest of the west. He began, in 533, by turning on the kingdom of the Vandals in northern Africa, weakened by dissatisfaction of their 'Roman' subjects. A main cause for this dissatisfaction was religious discrimination, even persecution of the catholic 'Roman' population by the mainly arian Vandals—who pursued a much more confrontational course in religious matters than did the Amals, also arian, in Ravenna. Yet their last legitimate king Childeric, descended from Roman rulers on his mother's side, was actually a catholic. Overthrown by a certain Gelimer, he appealed to Justinian for help (whereupon Gelimer had him killed). Amalasuintha supported Justinian against Gelimer. In 534, Athalaric died, and Amalasuintha appointed her cousin Theodahad as co-regent. Prokópios reports that she had no intention of giving up power and made Theodahad swear an oath in recognition of that fact; her letter informing Justinian of her decision

[50] *Iuste possem reprehendi, clementissime principum, si pacem vestram quaererem tepide, quam parentes meos constat ardentius expetisse. . . . non nos maiorum purpuratus tantum ordo clarificat, non sic sella regia sublimat quantum longe lateque patens gratia vestra nobilitat.*

[51] Athalaric to Iustinus; Cassiodorus, *Variae* 8.1.

[52] Prokópios, *Pólemoi* 5.2.

also explicitly speaks of joint kingship.[53] Soon, however, the queen was imprisoned and later killed, if not at the instigation, then certainly with the knowledge of the rather weak Theodahad. Victorious against the Vandals, Justinian seized on the murder of Amalasuintha to attack Theodahad next. Theodahad tried to buy him off by offering all of Italy south of the river Padus (Po), an offer he later withdrew. Nevertheless he was soon overthrown and murdered. The new king, Witigis, was not a member of the dynasty of the Amals, but enhanced his legitimacy by marrying a daughter of Amalasuintha.

Justinian eventually prevailed, recovering for Constantinople the lands of the Vandals and Ostrogoths and part of those belonging to the Visigoths—northern Africa, Italy, southern Spain, and the islands of the western Mediterranean. Gelimer and Witigis lived out their remaining days on estates in the east given to them by Justinian. The Ostrogoths might have been vanquished more quickly (Witigis was not yet their last king) if Justinian had not simultaneously intervened in the kingdom of the Visigoths, invited by a pretender to the Visigothic throne, and if he had not himself been attacked by the powerful Sasanians, rulers of the Persian empire (and in league with the Ostrogoths). Worst of all, however, during his reign the Mediterranean region suffered a devastating outbreak of the plague, which not only decimated the army in particular, but also weakened the empire economically: both the population and the tax revenue fell.

Over the next few decades the struggle against the Sasanians intensified. The very existence of the empire was at stake when, in 626, the Sasanians and their allies the Avars launched a simultaneous attack on the city of Constantinople from both Europe and Asia. The emperor Hêrákleios at last regained the upper hand, and dictated a peace to the Sasanians. Unfortunately for them, the struggle of the titans had an unexpected beneficiary—the Arabs, who enthusiastically embraced a newly minted creed, islam, and spread it by force of arms. Weakened as they both were, the Sasanians were crushed, while the Roman empire suffered a catastrophe far worse than anything inflicted by the Germans. Not only did it lose an enormous amount of territory, but its new islamic neighbours could not be assimilated. The Germans looked up to Constantinople and imitated it; the Arabs, with their more 'modern' creed than the christianity of the empire, were rather less respectful.

The capital of the Sasanians was Ktêsiphôn (in their language, Tyspōn) on the river Tígris, probably founded by the Macedonians—whence the Greek name—and not far from present-day Baghdad. Too close to the Arabs and too difficult to defend, it fell to them in 637, only 15 years after the hijra. The *shah-in-shah*, Yazdagirt III, withdrew to eastern Iran, but was assassinated in 651, the end of the dynasty and of its empire. Two years later, having already conquered Syría and Egypt, the Arabs for the first time appeared on the Bósporos. But due to the foresight of Constantine, who chose it not least for its eminently defensible location, and his successors, who secured the city with enormous fortifications, Constantinople unlike Ktêsiphôn was near-impregnable. The Arabs besieged it from 674 to 678 and again from 716 to 718—in vain. Although this was not the only reason why the empire survived, it was the most important in the sense of being a *condicio sine qua non*: despite the fact that, as pointed out earlier, practically all of the empire was equally 'Roman', it needed a central power, and that

[53] *qui regiam dignitatem communi nobiscum consilii robore sustineret.* Amalasuintha to Justinian; Cassiodorus, *Variae* 10.1; cf. Prokópios, *Pólemoi* 5.4.9. On the complicated relationship between Amalasuintha and Theodahad see ibid. 5.3.

central power in turn needed a safe base from which to run the empire, as by now it had to. Constantinople held on to Asia Minor, to parts of the Balkan peninsula, and to parts of Italy. But, aside from its enormous losses to the Arabs, the Germans also advanced again: the Visigoths recaptured southern Spain, the Lombards invaded Italy. In addition, non-Germanic peoples appeared on the scene, infiltrating the lands south of the Danube: Avars, Slavs, Bulgars (though they later adopted the Slavic language, the Bulgars were of Turkic origin).

3.1.4 The Roman empire of Constantinople: shrinkage and stabilization

The support of the church notwithstanding, the central power of the old Roman empire was dangerously weak in the face of long borders, beyond which warlike peoples were practically queuing up. They were attracted by the relative prosperity of the empire and in part pushed by other peoples in their rear (such as the Huns, who, arriving from central Asia in the fourth century, stirred up the Goths then settled north of the Black Sea). The various 'barbarian' peoples were in fact organized quite loosely. But when they collided with the power of the empire, everything was at stake for them. The 'Roman' troops, on the other hand, were partly made up of 'hereditary' soldiers: like members of other professions, the sons of soldiers followed in the footsteps of their fathers not necessarily because they wanted to, but because the central power compelled them. Landowners, grouped together for this purpose if their holdings were small, were obliged to supply recruits—but of course they avoided sending people they valued. Instead of sending men they could also pay money. The central power may well have come to prefer that, with money no doubt more reliably useful than the 'spare' individuals sent by the landowners. The legislation of the period suggests that attempts to dodge military service (to the point of self-mutilation) or the duty to provide recruits were widespread, and gives the impression of a pedantic, heavy-handed, oppressive machinery the morale of whose troops can hardly have been high.[54]

The troops had to be housed, clothed, equipped, fed, and remunerated; the money for that might be better invested in mercenaries, often of 'barbarian' origin but who at least were comparatively eager for service. A scarcity of good, motivated recruits from within the empire, and the great expense involved in keeping the army in being must have caused a reluctance to put troops in harm's way and risk loosing them. The alternative to fighting 'barbarian' peoples was to buy them off—as happened with the Goths and the Huns. This at least minimized the drain on manpower, though not on funds. In the passage in Iordanes, already referred to, where Theoderic asks Zénon to send him to Italy, one argument used by Theoderic is the saving that giving Italy to the Goths would mean for the emperor.[55]

Hard-pressed for manpower and money, the Roman army of the early christian period was far from the vast, cheap, and aggressive militia of the days when Roman rule was expanding. Strikingly, though the total nominal—and no doubt largely theoretical—strength of the army might be several hundred thousand (the exact figure is a subject of controversy), the field forces of the period were small. Justinian sent 16,000 men

[54] Codex Theodosianus Book VII contains much 4th- and 5th-cent. legislation on military matters.
[55] Iordanes, *Getica* 291.

against the Vandals to reconquer Africa and began the reconquest of Italy from the Goths with an army half that size. In the late sixth century, the *Stratêgikón*, a military manual of the emperor Mauríkios, deals with field forces between 5,000 and 15,000 strong. But it considers the lower figure the more realistic and views a field army of 20,000 as exceptional.[56] By contrast, the supply of 'barbarian' fighters was unlimited. If one tribe was destroyed, another would step in: no sooner had Justinian laboriously conquered the Ostrogoths in Italy than the Lombards appeared on its doorstep. Moreover, everybody, whether Roman or 'barbarian', fought with essentially the same basic weapons, simple and relatively cheap. The troops of the empire thus had an advantage neither in terms of numbers nor in terms of technology.

In such circumstances, the empire simply could not retain its old extent. Inevitably, it contracted towards its core—which, by then and as discussed earlier, was not Rome and the Latin west, but Constantinople and the Greek east. But as it shrank, in a sense the empire also grew stronger. Reduced essentially to Asia Minor, it was much more compact. Its borders were shorter not only in absolute terms, but also in relation to its size. Moreover, the new borders were more defensible. Like the capital Constantinople, Asia Minor was surrounded by water on three sides. On the fourth, it was protected by the great mountain ranges of the Taúros and the Antítauros, broken only by the Kilikian Gates. The equivalent of the massive land walls of Constantinople, they shut it off against the newly islamized Syría. Moreover, the new reduced empire was more homogeneous. The sixth-century empire of Justinian was still a cultural mosaic. In the west, Latin was prevalent. In the east, Greek was widely spoken, but also Syriac and Coptic—both written languages supporting a flourishing literature and vehicles moreover of religious dissent, as the monophysites (another schismatic branch of christianity) were strong in the populous areas where the two languages were most widely spoken, Syría and Egypt. By contrast, what was left of the empire by the late seventh century was fairly homogeneous, both linguistically and in terms of religion. People spoke Greek and, unlike the monophysites and arians, believed in the trinity—the 'orthodox' faith.

The rulers in Constantinople continued to levy taxes, payable in money, in the entire empire. Money taxes were a prerequisite of centralized supralocal rule. Unlike dues payable in kind, money was physically easy to collect and transport to the seat of power. There, unlike many other goods, it could be easily stored *until* it was needed—since it is neither bulky nor perishable—and could easily be exchanged for goods and services *as* needed by the central power, providing maximum flexibility. (However, the eastern empire also had taxes in kind, stored locally in special depots.) As we shall see, it is because no monetary taxation was possible in Latin christendom during its formative post-Roman period that the political structures there were never as centralized as in the eastern empire, even after monetary taxation on a regular basis had at last been reintroduced. In the empire of Constantinople, the money collected by the rulers served to pay for the army: even though much of it was stationed in the provinces, the fact that its pay came from Constantinople meant that rulers controlled the army directly, not, as in Latin christendom, by the uncertain intermediary of local magnates.[57]

[56] Goldsworthy (2002: 197).

[57] This is not the place to trace the evolution of the east Roman army in organizational terms. But essentially, in the second half of the first millennium it was made up of volunteers who served for cash (which does not mean that they may not also have received remuneration in kind). For a refutation

In the west, the crown depended on local magnates for support; in the eastern empire, it was the other way around. Here, the magnates, too, were in the pay of the central power: high rank was the concomitant of a high post—at court, in the administration of the provinces, or in the army (even if magnates usually were also great landowners). Unlike in the west, such rank was never hereditary. Indeed, high court offices were often filled with eunuchs to avoid any temptation to provide for offspring at the expense of the rulers, perhaps even to try to bring such offspring to the throne. The precaution must have seemed the more advisable as eastern magnates—much more than their counterparts in the west—were often involved in intrigues against rulers and indeed overthrew them regularly. This, too, underlines the quality of those rulers as real power-holders, which they were to a far greater extent than the rulers of Latin christendom.

The empire of Constantinople possessed something else that in the west did not exist before *c.*1800: a uniform law, based on what in the west became known as the *Corpus iuris*. This was a huge compilation of legal texts commissioned by Justinian, promulgated by him on 31 December 533 and explicitly declared to provide the solution for any conceivable legal problem. It comprised all laws then valid (*Codex Iustinianus*, in twelve books), excerpts from the writings of leading legal scholars of the past arranged by subject (the so-called *Digest*, in fifty books), and a textbook of jurisprudence (the *Institutiones* of Gaius, in four books, composed almost 400 years earlier but revised by the committee to which Justinian had entrusted his great project). Laws subsequently promulgated by Justinian were added to the *Corpus iuris* and are known as novels (*novellae constitutiones*).

Justinian may have been the last native speaker of Latin among the rulers of the empire; although the bulk of the *Corpus iuris* is in Latin, the novels are bilingual, Latin and Greek. Later rulers continued to add novels, that is new laws for the empire in its entirety—which the rulers of Latin christendom did not and, because they were far less powerful domestically, could not have done (the Carolingian rulers, who tried, are an exception, to which we shall return). The Justinianic *Corpus* as such was at first translated into Greek only unofficially, but there were official Greek adaptations, concretely the *Eklogế* ('Selection') of (probably) 741, the *Eisagôgế* ('Introduction') of (probably) 886, and the *Prócheiron* ('Handbook') of (probably) 907. They were compendia for everyday use, while in principle the *Corpus* in its entirety also remained valid. Probably in 888, the *Corpus* (or most of it) was at last officially edited in Greek. That Greek version of the *Corpus* is known as the Basilics (*ta Basiliká*, i.e. the 'royal' or 'imperial [laws]').[58]

Roman law in its Justinianic redaction thus remained the basis of the legal system of the eastern empire but underwent a certain amount of change. According to Alexander Kashdan, one important change was the further strengthening of the rulers. Justinian already acted as sole legislator, but in later east Roman jurisprudence the *basileús* is at the origin even of all administrative competence. The evolution that took place here is well illustrated by Léôn VI (reigns 886–912) abrogating all the existing, centuries-old legislation concerning the administration of towns, with their provisions about the *curia/boulế*, the *decuriones/bouleutaí*, the election of civic officials, and the like. Léôn was only bringing the law books in line with reality: he declared the subject matter of

of the conventional view that soldiers were farmers who held plots of land from the central power, see Whittow (1996: 113ff.).

[58]The exact date of each of the texts mentioned is controversial.

the legislation in question obsolete, since all was now managed by the foresight of the *basileús* and his administrators.[59] On the other hand, the *basileús* had to share power with the church. The Greek church was more consistently supportive of the (its) empire than the papacy, which after the re-establishment of a western emperorship opposed its holders more often than not. But the *basileús* could not run the church as he pleased, and indeed there was a considerable amount of conflict between rulers and patriarchs in the east, too. The further strengthening of the position of the church is another legal trend highlighted by Kashdan.[60]

3.1.5 The restoration of the imperial dignity in the west[61]

On christmas day 800, one of the successors of Chlodovech as king of the Franks, Charles I, was proclaimed *imperator* in Rome and crowned by pope Leo III. ('Charlemagne', *Carolus magnus*, 'Charles the Great'. Since I do not use the epithet 'great' for any rulers, I refer to him as Charles I.) The story of the 'new' western empire is, in an important sense, a story of failure. But it is a very instructive story not least in that it shows how important the Roman empire remained for European civilization. It was because people clung to the idea that the empire was still there that for all its weakness its story continued for another thousand years, bringing it relatively close to our own age: the new empire of 800 was revived twice more (in 962 and in 1312) and did not formally come to an end until 1806. Why and how did a new western imperial dignity come about in the first place?

What guided Charles was not some reminiscence of a past empire, but the real existing Roman empire of Constantinople. The concept of empire, as current at the time rather than as it had been in the past, was mediated by the papacy. In eighth-century Rome, the empire, governed from Constantinople, was no distant memory but an everyday reality. Justinian restored 'Roman' rule over Italy in the sixth century. Soon afterwards, the Lombards invaded Italy and conquered part of it: thereafter the country remained divided between them and Constantinople. But Rome remained under the authority of the 'exarch' of Ravenna, the emperor's viceroy for Italy. Although now on the periphery of the empire, Rome was still important, the seat of one of the five patriarchs of christendom recognized by the Council of Chalkêdṓn of 451—and the only one, with Constantinople, not to have come under the rule of the infidels yet, as by the mid-seventh century the patriarchs of Alexándreia, Antioch, and Jerusalem had done. The Roman patriarchs (i.e. the popes) not only represented what in Constantinople were called the Latins (*Latínoi*), that is, western and northern Europe. Their jurisdiction also comprised much of the territory that was still part of the empire and indeed contained many Greek speakers—more particularly Illyria and Greece itself, including the Aegean islands. Conversely, Italy and indeed Rome were under strong Greek cultural influence. In the 630s, many Greek speakers fled before the Arab conquest of Syría and Egypt to southern Italy and Sicily, where they joined refugees from the incursions of the Avars and Slavs into the Balkans and mainland Greece. Between 642 and 756, all incumbents of the see of Rome were

[59] Léôn VI, novels 46–7; quoted Liebeschuetz (2001: 109).

[60] A. P. Kashdan, article 'Law, Civil' in the *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (1991).

[61] This account of the restoration of a western empire is much indebted to Classen 1985. Also excellent is Folz (1964); see further Beumann (1958); Classen (1951); Fichtenau (1953); Schramm (1951).

'Greek'. Pope Leo III himself, although born in Rome, had a father of eastern, probably Arab origin.

But in the eighth century, Rome and Constantinople drifted apart because of the quarrel over the veneration of images. Léôn III (reigns 716–41) seized power at a time when, once again, the very survival of the empire seemed in doubt, the city of Constantinople being under siege from both Arab and Bulgar forces. The advance of the infidels (the Bulgars had not yet been converted to christianity), as well as a recurrence of the plague and a great, protracted eruption of the volcano of Théra (Santorini), which caused ash to rain down even on Macedon and Asia Minor, were interpreted as signs of divine wrath. The horrendous territorial losses of the past century encouraged the notion that only a radical spiritual renewal would save the empire. In the mid-720s, Léôn felt strong enough to outlaw the veneration of images (*eikónes*), supported in this by some of the high eastern clergy and influenced by both judaism and islam. Some in the church had always had misgivings about religious images. After all, the Fourth Commandment, nowadays curiously ignored even by fundamentalist christians and biblical literalists, unambiguously prohibits not just the veneration of images, but simply bans all images, religious or not.

Léôn succeeded in militarily securing the empire: god seemed to be with him. But among the mass of the people, the ban on the veneration of images provoked lasting indignation and unrest, not least in Italy. Pope Gregory II having publicly refused to obey the imperial decree, the garrison at Ravenna rebelled and killed the exarch Paúlos. Only the intervention of the pope prevented the soldiers from proclaiming a counter-*basileús* (as happened in Greece). The new exarch Eutýchios kept a low profile, dependent on the good will of the pope. But the new pope, Gregory III, in 731 had an Italian synod declare the stance taken by the emperor a heresy. In response, Léôn dispatched warships, dispersed by a storm; more effectively, he confiscated the extensive papal estates in southern Italy and Sicily. Worse still, he stripped the Roman patriarch of his spiritual suzerainty over any territory controlled by Constantinople and transferred it to the patriarch of Constantinople. Undoing this humiliation remained the constant, but elusive goal of the papacy in the decades that followed.

When Léôn was succeeded by his son Constantine V (reigns 741–75), the conflict intensified. At the synod of Hiéreia (754), the new emperor went beyond the mere ban on the veneration of images. This was now not only declared heretical, but Constantine ordered religious images to be destroyed. In the former cathedral of Constantinople, the church of 'Saint Irene' or rather of the Divine Peace (*hagía eirênê*), the mosaic in the apse still shows the starkly simple cross that must have replaced a more pictorial earlier mosaic—the church having been originally built in the fifth century, then remodelled under Constantine. By contrast, the present-day mosaic of the virgin and child in the main apse of the 'Great Church' (dedicated to the Divine Wisdom, *hagía sophía*) next door dates from the ninth century and replaces one destroyed by the *eikonoklástai* or 'breakers of images', as their opponents called them.

One beneficiary of this domestic struggle and the continuing Bulgar and Arab threat to the empire were the Lombards. In 751, they conquered Ravenna, the seat of the exarch. Originally arian, the Lombards had by then joined the christian mainstream; nevertheless, the papacy still distrusted them. To avoid coming under their political influence, it forged an alliance with the de facto leader of the Franks, Pippin, enabling him formally to depose

the ruling house of the Merovingians, the descendants of Chlodovech. The hereditary right to the throne that Pippin lacked was made up for by *anointing* him king, a novel practice though not without precedent—recorded in the Old Testament, it was also used by the Visigoths, whose kingship had however been defunct since 718. Pippin was (probably) anointed by a bishop already on being raised to the kingship in 751, and (definitely) again when, in 754, he had his royal status confirmed by pope Stephen II in a ceremony held in the basilica of Saint Denis near Paris. This evidently created a precedent: the unction quickly became an integral, and constitutive, part of the inauguration ritual for a new king, perhaps even before the coronation, which may have been added later. The coronation seems not to have been practised as part of the inauguration ritual either by the Visigoths or by the Merovingians, and despite the (Roman-inspired?) precedent of Chlodovech, the Franks may not have (re-)adopted it until after the imperial coronation of 800.[62]

In return for his enkinging by the pope, Pippin attacked the Lombards from the rear. Pope Stephen, on his own authority, created him a hereditary *patricius Romanorum*, a title hitherto borne by the exarch and expressing the role of protector of the city of Rome. When pope Hadrian I refused to anoint the new Frankish king Charles—and his brother, who briefly shared the throne with him—after their accession in 768, the Lombard king attacked Charles. But he was defeated and Charles, in 774, united the Lombard kingdom with his own. Protector of the pope, Charles as Lombard king had now also become his neighbour. In his quality as *patricius Romanorum*, he had considerable influence in Rome, displacing that of the *basileús*. The practice of dating every official papal document by the year of the reign of the current *basileús* was last observed in 772, and east Roman coins ceased to be minted in Rome shortly afterwards.

With Charles, the protectorate over the papacy, hitherto exercised by the *basileús*, fell to a trousered 'barbarian'. He was, however, determined to become as much like the rulers of Constantinople as he could. A warrior at heart, Charles nevertheless felt that if the *basileús* took part in the running of the church, he ought to do the same. In 325, Constantine I had convened the First Ecumenical (= 'worldwide') Council in Níkaia (now İznik), presided over it, and guided its decision-making by threatening independent-minded bishops with exile, all in a futile effort to quell the arian schism. This set a precedent for the involvement of Roman rulers in theological debates and church politics. We have seen how active Léôn III and Constantine V were in this respect. Charles, on several occasions, himself convened and led gatherings of the prelates of his realm, very much like a *basileús* and quite unlike later secular rulers of western christendom. Moreover, he challenged the traditional role of the *basileús* in the universal church. In 787, the empress Irene, regent during the minority of her son Constantine VI, convened the Seventh Ecumenical Council (again in Níkaia) to have the ban on images reversed. King Charles commissioned Theodulf, one of his religious advisers and later bishop of Orléans, to compose a protest against the council and its recognition as ecumenical. Theodulf and his collaborators produced a voluminous tract in four books, the so-called *Libri Carolini*, which also contains polemical attacks against Irene and Constantine, their role at the council, and the titles accorded them in its decrees.

[62] On the origin of the royal unction, and the debate on the role it played in the enkinging of Pippin, cf. esp. Angenendt (2004).

Brief marginal notes in a draft copy are attributed to Charles. They look too practised to be in his hand, and no doubt represent oral remarks by Charles when the draft was read to him: though he relied on collaborators, he took an active interest in what they were doing. The *Libri Carolini* were presented as *Opus Caroli contra synodum*, 'The work of Charles against the synod' (of Níkaia). Pope Hadrian was not happy, as he had sent representatives to Níkaia, and in the decrees of the council found nothing that he felt tempted to protest against. On the contrary, he must have been relieved to be at last rid of the quarrel over images, and he was not about to start a fresh quarrel with Constantinople just so the Frankish king could raise his theological and political profile. Moreover, Theodulf and his collaborators had based themselves on an inadequate Latin translation of the decrees of the council from the Greek, for which it seems collaborators of the pope were to blame. Of course Hadrian had to be diplomatic. The semi-official *Annals of the Frankish Kingdom* note that envoys of Hadrian arrived at the Frankish court bearing gifts. The editor of the recent re-edition of the *Libri Carolini*, Ann Freeman, believes that the envoys also brought a papal refusal to endorse that document, although the *Annals* are silent on this. But no more was apparently heard of the *Libri*.[63]

A *basileús* made laws: again quite unlike later western rulers, Charles legislated extensively, producing one *capitulare* (a royal edict, so-called because it was divided into *capitula* or paragraphs) after another. Further, like any member of the eastern elite, a *basileús* was literate. Not least, presumably, for that reason, Charles

> even attempted to write and in his bed kept slate and wax tablets under the pillows wherever he went, so that, when he had time to spare, he might accustom his hand to tracing the letters. But this misplaced effort was begun too late and he never was very good at it.

—thus the somewhat uncharitable verdict of his friend and biographer, Einhard. Einhard also records that the king spoke Latin as fluently as his native German, but understood Greek better than he spoke it.[64] Although it is remarkable that he knew Greek at all and eastern rulers would mostly know not a word of Latin, the very effort that Charles clearly invested in acquiring such cultural attributes betrays his status as something of an outsider.

The church incorporated in his favourite residence at Aachen, built in the 790s, was equipped with Roman columns carried there from the old imperial palace in Ravenna—the king probably not realizing that he was doing what Theoderic had done before him. The architecture of the Aachen church was inspired by the church of Saint Vitalis in Ravenna, which in turn strongly resembles the church of Saints Sérgios and Bákchos in Constantinople (now known in Turkish as the 'little Hagía Sophía', *Küçük Ayasofia*). Both the church of Saint Vitalis and that of Saints Sérgios and Bákchos were built in the reign of Justinian, at least in the case of the last-named church at his initiative. All are built on a central plan, of a general type that by the eighth century had replaced the old Roman basilica in the east. It seems significant that although Ravenna also possesses great churches of the basilica type that date from the same period as Saint Vitalis, that is the sixth century, Charles should have commissioned his architects to follow the type that in his day would be regarded as more closely associated with the empire of Constantinople. No doubt the famous mosaics in Saint Vitalis depicting

[63] *Libri Carolini* in MGH Concilia ii Suppl. 1; 1998 re-edn. with an introduction by Freeman.
[64] Einhard, *Vita Caroli Magni* 25.

Justinian, his wife Theodóra—both in their imperial robes—and their court also made Saint Vitalis look the more 'imperial' church.

All of this suggests keenness on the part of the Frankish king to be, and be seen as, the equal of the rulers of Constantinople, that is the 'Roman' rulers as they were then unquestioningly considered not only by themselves—a keenness attested well before the imperial coronation of 800. If Charles was pushing, the papacy, or at least Leo III, was not really unhappy to be pulled along. By conquering the Lombard kingdom, Charles had attained the very position of dominance in Italy that the papacy had originally allied itself with the Franks to prevent the Lombard king from attaining; there was no way this dominance could now be undone. Short perhaps of inviting Constantinople to embark on another reconquest of Italy: but from the papal point of view, that probably was no very attractive alternative. Nor was it practical: Constantinople was busy defending itself against persistent, more or less annual, Arab attacks against Asia Minor, which any heavy engagement in the west would have left exposed. Moreover, the power of the papacy was cultural only. It was much more likely to work on the culturally insecure Frankish rulers than on the eastern rulers, who, with the patriarch of Constantinople at hand, could easily match the papacy in the religious field and who, unlike Latin christendom, did not need the church as a provider of literate administrators. But if the Frankish protectorate was there to stay, then it made sense, indeed became urgent, to make it look as glamorous as possible. It would look much better to have as protector a Roman emperor of one's own, rather than just a 'barbarian' king. In any case, that king was a king because the pope had made him one (or his father, anyway). So why not go all the way and make him an emperor?

The occasion was furnished by personal problems of pope Leo III. Of what seems to have been plebeian origin as well as dubious personal integrity, he had powerful enemies in Rome, who had him waylaid in an apparent, but unsuccessful, attempt to blind him and thus make him unfit for office—the standard treatment, in the eastern empire, for deposed rulers, because murder was so much greater a sin. Accused, at the same time, of various misdeeds (the exact nature and plausibility of which is hard to establish, the records having been censored after his rehabilitation), Leo fled from Rome and sought refuge with king Charles. Probably because of his relatively weak position in Rome, Leo had already previously thrown in his lot with Charles: following his somewhat coup-like accession (on the day his predecessor Hadrian was buried), he sent the king the key to Saint Peter's tomb and the standard of the city, thereby emphasizing his recognition of Charles as protector, including of himself personally.

While treating him with the greatest outward respect and inviting him to his court, Charles let the refugee pope travel all the way to Paderborn, in recently conquered Saxony, about as far as was physically possible—a demonstration of who was more powerful here. The meeting at Paderborn, in 799, must have been when the imperial coronation was agreed on between Charles and Leo. Charles, in his turn, now travelled to Rome, for the fourth and last time in his reign. In December 800, he presided over a synod there, which, somewhat unsurprisingly in light of the Frankish troops that must have accompanied the king, found the pope not guilty of the charges against him. The pope thereupon, on christmas day, crowned Charles Roman emperor in Saint Peter's cathedral.

That the coronation took Charles by surprise is a myth based on a remark by his biographer Einhard.

At that time he received the title *imperator augustus* [*imperatoris et augusti nomen accepit*]. At first he disliked it so much that he said that he would not have entered the church that day, despite its being a high feast, had he been able to foresee the pope's intention.[65]

Readers may be excused for taking this to mean that it was the fact of the coronation that Charles disliked. The grammar, however, is unambiguous: Einhard is really talking about the title only. It seems that it was indeed the title as such that displeased Charles, though contrary to what Einhard suggests, the problem for him was not the words *imperator* and *augustus* in themselves. During the ceremony, Charles was apparently proclaimed *imperator Romanorum*, 'emperor of the Romans'. But he used that title only briefly, quickly changing it to a Latin version of the title borne by the rulers of Constantinople: 'Charles, most serene *augustus*, god-crowned great and pacific *imperator*'. To this was appended the phrase 'ruling the Roman empire', not found in the eastern title, as well as the words 'and also, by god's mercy, king of the Franks and Lombards' (*Karolus serenissimus augustus a Deo coronatus magnus pacificus imperator Romanum gubernans imperium qui et per misericordiam Dei rex Francorum et Langobardorum*).

Charles wanted to be just like the eastern rulers. Hence his appropriation of their exact title, with its signature element 'god-crowned' (*theostephês* or *theósteptos*). Apart from being responsible for the 'wrong' title *imperator Romanorum*, pope Leo may also have designed the coronation ceremony in such a way as to make it look as if he were bestowing on Charles a dignity that was his to give. Although crowned by the patriarch, the eastern rulers were not made by him: they owed their office to god alone, the coronation, a relatively recent addition to the inauguration procedure, being an expression of that but not constitutive of their dignity. At this time, the eastern rulers were not normally called 'of the Romans'. There being only one emperor, no such qualification was necessary—it had never been used by Augustus or any of his successors. True, already before 800 non-official sources, and occasionally official documents or seals, used the phrase *basileús (tôn) Rhômaíôn*, literally 'king of the Romans'. Perhaps this had something to do with the ambiguity of the term *basileús*, which could originally refer to any king—even though east Roman protocol by then reserved it for the rulers of Constantinople and called lesser, foreign royalty *rhêx*, the Greek transliteration of the Latin term for king. Charles clearly wanted to bring home the fact that he was 'Roman' emperor. But, apparently, to him and his advisers changing the official eastern title seemed the wrong way to do it. Instead, they preferred adding something to that title that made the point unambiguously: on hearing 'Romans' contemporaries would have thought first of the inhabitants of the city of Rome (as in the title *patricius Romanorum*). By contrast, the phrase 'ruling the Roman empire' left no room for such confusion.

Einhard may have had his own axe to grind. He clearly disliked the 'Romanizing' tendencies of his king and that sentiment may have been shared by many other Franks. As we saw, Einhard emphasizes that Charles always wore Frankish dress, disliked foreign garments, and only put on Roman ceremonial dress twice in his life in order to please the pope—in other words, not because he really wanted to. Einhard evidently disapproved of Charles' 'misplaced effort' (*labor praeposterus*) to learn to write, undertaken almost certainly (although Einhard would never have said so) because the eastern rulers could write. Einhard no doubt thought that rulers as he conceived them, and was used to,

[65] Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni* 28.

had better things to do. His insinuation that Charles disliked the imperial title *as such*, rather than its precise form, could be the result of a misunderstanding, or, as seems more likely, a deliberate manipulation. The sentence immediately following the one in question suggests the latter: 'Yet with great patience did he [Charles] bear the ill will caused by his assumption of the title, at which the Roman emperors took offence [*Romanis imperatoribus super hoc indignantibus*].' The reference to 'Roman emperors' of course designates the rulers in Constantinople. Just like the preceding sentence, this sentence technically contains no lie: Constantinople was indeed annoyed, as Charles had presumably indeed been annoyed about the title given him by the pope. But it is inconceivable that Einhard, as one who knew Charles well, should have been ignorant of his official claim to be *Romanum gubernans imperium*. By clever phrasing, Einhard manages to create the impression that if Charles was emperor, the fault for which lay with the pope, at least he was no 'Roman' emperor.[66]

With regard to Constantinople, 800 was a good time to proclaim Charles emperor. The throne there was occupied by the empress Irene. Originally regent for her son Constantine VI (until 790), she overthrew Constantine in 797. With Irene, for the first time since Augustus the empire was officially ruled by a woman. To make clear that she was as good as any man, she styled herself *basileús*, the masculine form of the title, rather than using the customary feminine form *basílissa*. But her opponents were unimpressed. In Rome, the view could be taken that legally the throne was vacant, and it was clear that given the unsettled domestic situation in the east (not to mention the continuing Arab and Bulgar threat), Irene would not be able to react forcefully to Charles' coronation. Many no doubt felt that a woman on the throne was a sign of decadence. Charles, by contrast, after 800 adopted a new seal bearing the legend RENOVATIO ROMAN(i) IMP(erii), 'renewal of the Roman empire'—more proof, if it were needed, that indeed he viewed his imperial dignity as Roman. The term 'renewal' must not be understood in the sense of the recreation of something that had ceased to exist, but in the sense of 'reform'; like every other aspect of Charles' 'imperial' progapanda, this, too, was implicitly aimed at Constantinople. Had not the eastern rulers proved too weak to defend Rome against the Lombards, whom Charles, by contrast, had conquered? So, too, would he do better than they in other respects.

A slight problem arose from the fact that, once Irene had been deposed in 802, it became difficult to deny legitimacy to the eastern rulers. They, insisting on their own Roman-ness, now took to including systematically the words *(tôn) Rhômaíôn* in their own title while refusing to recognize as Roman the new imperial dignity created by Charles. Seeking Frankish protection, local potentates embroiled Charles in a military quarrel with Constantinople over Venetia and Dalmatia. Charles relinquished those lands in return for grudging recognition as *basileús—tôn Phrángôn*, of the Franks, rather than *Rhômaíôn*, but still. He seems to have had no intention of calling the existence of the eastern empire in question. In a letter to the *basileús* Michael written in 813, the year before his death, he explained that it was his aim 'to establish peace, long sought after and constantly desired, between the eastern and the western empire [*diu quaesitam et semper desideratam pacem inter orientale atque occidentale imperium stabilire*]'.[67]

[66] Charles' 'revised' title (used from 802 at the latest) quoted in Classen (1985: 71).
[67] Quoted Classen (1985: 95).

What Charles had in mind was an imperial dignity quite independent of the church, after the example of the *basileía* of Constantinople. Although Charles would have seen no contradiction, his idea of a Roman emperor was Constantine V, not Augustus. As the rulers of Constantinople normally did, Charles appointed his son and designated successor Louis co-emperor in 813, in a ceremony at Aachen in which the pope had no part. Louis did likewise, creating his son Lothar co-emperor in 817. He later had himself crowned by the pope, too, as did Lothar. This did not yet mean that coronation by the pope was necessary to become western emperor, but the role of the pope was growing, not least since the Frankish kingship itself was weakening. By 875, when Charles II acquired the imperial title, it was clear that he did so by virtue of the papal coronation.

Louis also abandoned the claim to be ruling the—or a—Roman empire, or at least ceased to stress it. He styled himself merely *imperator augustus*, without any addition. Louis also relinquished the title 'king of the Franks and Lombards', which Charles had retained even after 800. But his seal bears the legend RENOVATIO REGNI FRANC (orum), 'renewal of the kingdom of the Franks'[68]—which, incidentally, demonstrates that the 'renewal of the Roman empire' announced on Charles' seal did not imply that the empire had temporarily ceased to exist, any more than the Frankish kingdom. Subsequent rulers oscillated between those two slogans. Charles II (emperor 875–7) combined them (*renovatio imperii Romani et Francorum*), his successor Charles III (emperor 881–7) went back to *renovatio regni Francorum*. Otto III (emperor 996–1002) had *renovatio imperii Romanorum*; Henry II (emperor 1014–24) returned once more to *renovatio regni Francorum*.[69]

Under Louis I, who spent much of his reign at war with his four sons, and more clearly still after his death in 840, the Carolingian empire disintegrated, divided between rival rulers. This further devalued the imperial title. Once the empire ceased to expand, as under Charles I it had done, it became evident how much less stable it was than the empire of Constantinople (and how much more dependent any western emperor therefore was on the legitimacy provided by the pope). With no more wars of conquest, the booty from which had been an important source of revenue and, perhaps more importantly, an incitement for the magnates and lesser lords of the realm to make war on behalf of the king,[70] the kind of empire run by Charles was no longer possible. The Frankish empire thrived as long as it grew, but could not deal with stability. The crown was incapable of exercising effective supralocal control. As will be shown in more detail later, insufficient monetization favoured the local lords at the expense of the central power. Given the low degree of monetization of economic life in the west, a centralized political organization based on tax revenue in coin after the example of the eastern empire, with a developed administrative apparatus and a standing army, was impossible.

In the late ninth century, the imperial title became associated with rule over Italy and eventually even passed to non-Carolingians—Wido (Guido) of Spoleto, crowned emperor in 891, and Berengar I of Ivrea, crowned in 915. Arnulf and Louis III, both of them Carolingians, also came to Italy to be crowned emperor (in 896 and 901, respectively), but, unable to gain a foothold there, soon withdrew, their title pretty much meaningless.

[68] Classen (1985: 100–1).
[69] Folz (1953: 43–4, 76–7, 78).
[70] Cf. Halsall (2003: 89ff.).

When Berengar died in 924, the western imperial dignity lapsed once more. It was only revived in 962, when the east Frankish king Otto I, having acquired the kingship of Italy, went to Rome for another imperial coronation (the Frankish empire, by that time, had permanently split into a western kingdom and an eastern one, which were to develop into France and Germany, respectively). From then on, the claim of the east Frankish (German) rulers to the imperial dignity became a customary right. For that reason, they adopted the title 'king of the Romans' until crowned emperor. The first to do so was Henry III following the death of his father Konrad II in 1039;[71] from about 1130, the title was used consistently. As in the case of Otto, king since 936, the imperial coronation often took place many years after the royal coronation, if at all. The imperial dignity was now bestowed by the pope, and he could withhold it. The last imperial coronation by a pope was that of Charles V in 1530 (after that the German rulers adopted the imperial title without it, as Maximilian I had already done in 1508). Between 962 and the death of Maximilian I, the last pre-Reformation emperor, in 1519, there were no less than 280 years without an emperor, just over half the total. The longest gap was between the death of Frederic II in 1250 and the imperial coronation of Henry VII in 1312.[72]

The Graecism *imperator Romanorum* (*Romanorum* = *Rhômaíôn*), only sporadically used by Otto I, became a permanent part of the imperial title from 982, that is, in the reign of Otto II, married to an east Roman princess, Theophanṓ.[73] Charles had rejected this very title because the eastern rulers did not call themselves 'of the Romans' in his day. But they started doing so in reaction, precisely, to his imperial coronation; as a result, again in imitation of Greek practice, this title was adopted in the west in the tenth century. In other respects, too, the tenth-century 'Saxon' emperors (so-called because they came from the Saxon ducal house) again copied the rulers in Constantinople—for example imitating their robes, which the Carolingians had disdained in favour of Frankish dress.[74] The crown of the Holy Roman Empire, now kept in Vienna, likewise shows strong east Roman influence, in terms of its shape as well as in terms of its semiotic and more specifically pictorial programme.[75] It was made either for the imperial coronation of Otto I in 962 or for the elevation of his son to the co-emperorship in 967, this latter measure, as we saw, another practice borrowed from the east. Otto I, but also some of his successors, repeatedly deposed popes, as the eastern rulers occasionally deposed patriarchs of Constantinople. However, unlike the situation in Constantinople, rather than being the source of the political authority of the incumbents the western imperial dignity was but a facultative addition to their kingship. Moreover, the east Frankish, or German, rulers after 962 never dominated Latin christendom as Charles I had done, or as the eastern rulers still dominated orthodox christendom. It is important to realize that the post-962 western emperors never had, and never claimed, any power of command over other rulers. (The Carolingians had not claimed any sort of suzerainty over other rulers, either, but in their time there were few other rulers to speak of anyway, and none of them had much weight in christendom as a whole.)

[71] Folz (1953: 82).
[72] Cf. LdM 'Kaiser, Kaisertum'; Folz (1953: 118).
[73] Folz (1953: 61, 63).
[74] Folz (1953: 81).
[75] Staats (1976: passim, esp. 128–9).

3.2 Rule and society in pre-Reformation christendom

3.2.1 De-urbanization

From a west or central European perspective, it seems natural to attribute the decay of the Roman towns in western Europe and north of the Alps to the 'fall' of the Roman empire, or more precisely its withdrawal from those areas. But there is little or no connection. Almost everywhere the towns decayed well before the end of Roman rule. Even in Asia Minor, where Roman rule continued for a millennium or more, the towns did not fare better than in the west.[76] The towns deteriorated for several reasons that applied in all areas once part of the Roman empire, reasons to be discussed in a moment. In the east Roman empire—more particularly Asia Minor, its core area during the period when it fought for survival against the Arabs—there were, however, also specific reasons that did not hold in the west. For one thing, there were so many more towns. If the reasons why people began to shun towns in general were much the same in the west and in the east, nevertheless the fact that the east was much more urbanized made de-urbanization more dramatic. Second, the eastern towns that remained part of the empire were thereby integrated in a political framework incomparably more centralized than the pre-christian empire had been. The centre, Constantinople, therefore exerted a greater pull on the population than Rome had done in the old empire. The capital siphoned off tax money and accumulated it; people followed. Although part of the money flowed back into the provinces, much also remained in the capital, letting it prosper at the expense of smaller towns—the more so the more remote they were. Moreover, in an era when raids by invaders were common, the capital was safe behind its gigantic walls, within which there was room, never used in its entirety, for hundreds of thousands of people. To a lesser extent, the same was true of a few other eastern cities, Thessaloníkê foremost among them. Thus, while many small towns were eventually abandoned more completely than usually happened in the west, the capital and some other important cities were huge by the standards of the period, incomparably more populous than any western settlement.

3.2.1.1 *The decay of the towns as reflected in their physical remains: southwestern Asia Minor*

In the west, what we know about the second half of the first millennium derives mostly from written sources, which permit only the vaguest guess at the actual physical appearance of a settlement of the period. By contrast, the physical evidence surviving from the first millennium in the west is very patchy, and must be recovered by excavation. This in turn can only be done very selectively: not only have the Roman and post-Roman remains of most of the more important towns of the western Roman empire since been built over not once, but again and again, but those towns are at present almost always densely populated, making large-scale excavation impossible. By contrast, in Asia Minor, where the Roman empire continued in unbroken existence until well after the turn of the second millennium, many large towns had by then been abandoned completely, and when the Turks took over the region, that was not reversed. Moreover, given the favourable climate, masonry even of the humblest dwellings is usually to some degree extant above ground even after two millennia or more. Here, the richness of physical remains permits

[76] Cf. Liebeschuetz (1992: 4, 6).

a much better understanding of the long-term development of settlement patterns than can easily be gained in the west. Lykía and Pamphylía, which we have visited already, also make for a good case study of the evolution of the towns between the third century and the eleventh, when this part of Asia Minor began to fall under Turkish rule. That case study in turn will permit inferences to be drawn on the causes of what went on there that I submit are applicable to the Latin west, too—but which in the existing literature have been largely neglected or misinterpreted.

In the second century, the *koinón tôn Lykíôn* apparently had a membership of thirty-six towns in a territory whose population probably never exceeded 200,000. The total number of towns in Lykía was considerably higher still, even though towns not members of the Lykian league are likely to have been very small indeed.[77] The towns of this region were situated on the coast and in valleys close to the coast, where one would expect them; but also high up in the Taúros mountains that run parallel to the coast. Thus, the ruins of Arýkanda, Sélgê, or Termêssós are spectacularly set in subalpine scenery. The site of the latter two in particular (really already in Pisidía, but administratively part of the Roman twin province of Lykía–Pamphylía) would appear to have been selected with a view to making them difficult, not easy, to reach, another indication that trade played little or no role in the genesis and early history of such towns. All three lie between 25 and 30 km (16–19 miles) inland as the crow flies, Arýkanda at an altitude of about 850 m, the other two about 1,000 m above sea level. Given the remoteness of their location, it is difficult to see how Sélgê and Termêssós in particular could grow as large as, in the prosperous second century, they appear to have been.

Termêssós and its surroundings are now entirely deserted—small wonder given the almost absurd site on steep, rocky slopes at a point where three mountain valleys meet. The gradients must have made the transport of heavy goods very difficult, at least downhill—carrying building material up would have been easier. Since waggon traffic must have been impossible, transport evidently relied on pack animals or indeed porters—even the Roman roads of the region use stairs to overcome steep gradients.[78] The townspeople must have been fed with the help of terraced fields, probably situated at some distance and awkward to reach. How defensible the site really was is difficult to say, since no one ever seems to have put that question to the test. Even Alexander of Macedon, in 333 BCE, came, saw, and moved on. This was despite the fact that Termêssós does not appear to have had defensive walls at the time. Moreover, Alexander had succeeded in outmanoeuvering the Termessian troops that had tried to block his passage before he could get close, and received delegates from Sélgê encouraging him to destroy Termêssós, the two towns evidently being on less than friendly terms.[79] The site has not been excavated, but the architectural remains are scattered wide. The theatre had 24 rows of seats (26 according to another count) and is comparable to those of important towns on the Lykian coast like Xanthós (21 rows) or Lêtṓion (25 rows); the capacity is estimated at 4,200. Though not among the largest such structures, this theatre is nevertheless among the more spectacular. From the seats one has a view of Mount Sólymos (Güllük Dağı, 1,266 m), a dramatic rocky peak rising up only a short distance behind the stage wall

[77] For the number and names of the towns that were members, and the non-membership of many more, see Jones (1971: 106–7); on the total population of Lykía Foss (1993: 5).

[78] Morganstern (1993: plate 15) shows an example.

[79] Arrian, *Anábasis* 1.27–8; cf. Bean (1970: 20–1, 110–11).

but separated from it by a gorge that from the seats is invisible, as a result of which spectators experienced the theatre as if it were suspended in the air.[80]

The terrain around Sélgê is rocky, exposed, and no doubt often covered by snow in winter. The cultivation of fields and gardens and the grazing of cattle are possible, as the inhabitants of the village now occupying part of the site of the ancient settlement demonstrate. The villagers use the terraces constructed for feeding that settlement, but they are far fewer than the inhabitants of old. The theatre at Sélgê has a capacity variously estimated at 8,700 or 10,000, with 45 or 46 rows. Despite its remote location, it thus competes with those of the rich towns of the Pamphylian coastal plain: Áspendos (40 rows), Pérgê (about 40 rows), and giant Sídê (51 rows preserved, of a probable total of 58). Their capacity is given at 15,000 or 20,000 in each case; those evidently are ballpark figures.[81]

Arrian, narrating the campaigns of Alexander, speaks of Sélgê as a *pólis megálê*, a 'big *pólis*'. Machatschek and Schwarz posit a population of some 50,000 in its heyday, of which 10,000 would have lived in Sélgê City; again no doubt such figures must be treated with caution.[82] In Termêssós, too, much of the population belonging to the *pólis* would have lived in the surrounding countryside. Nevertheless: the construction of large towns with impressive monuments—those now visible mostly date from the first and second centuries CE, while the tombs, very numerous in Termêssós, are often much older—in such difficult terrain is testimony to a determined attachment to towns of this particular, monumental type. In similar fashion, it is striking that even a site like Arýkanda possesses public monuments—the usual array: *bouleutḗrion* (a meeting house for the council), *gymnásion*, stadium, baths, theatre (20 or 21 rows), *ôi deíon*—on a scale that seems implausibly splendid for a settlement that by today's standards can have been little more than a large village. Unlike most Roman-era towns of the region (including Termêssós and Sélgê), Arýkanda has long been the object of systematic excavation. Yet no substantial residential quarter seems yet to have been found. The monuments look urban, and yet this was probably no city as it would be understood nowadays.

Here, too, the site impresses and surprises, being both spectacular and disadvantageous. Again, no one lives here now: there is agriculture around the site, but no village exists on the site itself. It is on the edge of a valley at the foot of dramatic, rocky cliffs (Şahinkaya, Falcon's Rock, in Turkish). The giant sheer rock face was probably created by an earthquake, a frequent occurrence in the region. Behind, not far distant but invisible from the site, the mountains rise up to form the highest peak in the region (Massýkitos? now Kizlarsivrisi, 3,086 m). A suspicion already nurtured by Termêssós is here confirmed: this site, despite serious inconveniences, was in part selected because of its aesthetic quality. No one would have chosen it for defence—or trade, for that matter. The monuments are partly constructed on terraces linked by stairs: here, too, wagon traffic was out of the question. The presumptive *agorá* or main square is in the highest part of the site. A building with twelve shops located on this square demonstrates that

[80] One might think that counting rows of seats in a theatre, esp. if it is as well preserved as many of those in Lykía and Pamphylía, is easy. Nevertheless, the figures given by Brodersen (1999) and Ciancio Rossetto and Pisani Sartorio (1994) regularly differ by one or two rows, occasionally more.

[81] Machatschek and Schwarz (1981: 72, but cf. 118). According to George Bean (1970: 64), the theatre at Áspendos, which is now in use again, was built for 20,000, but allegedly has had up to 40,000 spectators cramming in for some events.

[82] Arrian, *Anábasis* 1.28; Machatschek and Schwarz (1981: 118).

selling and buying took place—but, surely, because the settlement existed, not because anyone would have chosen the site as a convenient market.

The earthquake creating the rock face above the settlement of course was not the last, and even without seismic activity falling boulders would be a constant menace here. Before being cleared, the stadium, situated right under the cliff, seems to have been filled with them. To make things worse, a stream cascades down the cliff and then runs diagonally through the built-up area. Often dry in the summer, it becomes a torrent when the snow melts in the spring. Falling boulders and foundations undermined by the torrent repeatedly necessitated repair work to the theatre. The archaeological evidence indicates that on one occasion such work was interrupted when more giant boulders crashed into the theatre—possibly on occasion of the earthquake of 141. Another earthquake, in 240, severely damaged most monuments on the site. But to develop the site for aesthetic rather than practical reasons was no doubt made easier by the fact that few of the inhabitants of the *pólis* Arýkanda actually lived here. The smallish residential quarter near the *agorá* and the shops mentioned above are situated on a separate knoll, at some distance from the cliff and thus not exposed to the dangers emanating from it. It seems plausible to assume that a settlement on this knoll preceded the founding of the *pólis*.[83]

All three towns discussed were at some point abandoned, though this process was no doubt gradual. Titular bishops of Sélgê and Termêssós are still listed in the early second millennium, but may well have resided somewhere else entirely.[84] At Sélgê, the many churches built in the fourth and fifth centuries decayed, even collapsed, and were rebuilt on a reduced scale; fallen debris was at first cleared away, but later left lying. The present-day Turkish village seems to have come into existence only about 200 years ago.[85] At Arýkanda, too, a basilica constructed in the fourth or fifth century was derelict when a smaller chapel was built into it. This phenomenon is found throughout the region, but the physical remains are difficult to date. Thus, the chapel at Arýkanda is variously assigned to the sixth,[86] or the seventh/eighth century;[87] other authors think that the smaller churches built into dilapidated bigger churches may generally date only from the eleventh century, when the region was quite prosperous.[88] Nor do we know where those who built the small new churches lived. Country-dwellers may have honoured the shrines of their more urban ancestors; and even if the former towns were still populated, they probably looked pretty un-urban by then.

Probably in the sixth century, on a spur 2 km distant from Arýkanda, a new settlement sprang up (the date is mainly based on the coins found there). Unlike the old site, this one was highly defensible. On one side, it overlooks a gorge formed by the river Arýkandos (its Turkish name is variously given as Akçay, Aykiriçay, or Basgöz Çayı); the other side was protected by a defensive wall equipped with several towers. There seems to have been

[83]Bean (1978: 138) (cf. the photograph of the stadium still partially filled with boulders, ibid. fig. 81); Knoblauch (1993: 128–9); Bayburtluoğlu (1993: 120).

[84]In the 5th cent., a joint see of Termêssós and Eudokiás is mentioned repeatedly, the latter place probably identical with the present-day village of Evdir Hanı; from this it has been inferred that the people of Termêssós had moved to this more convenient valley site within the *chôra* of the old *pólis* (Bean 1970: 104–5). But a separate bishopric of Termêssós is in fact later mentioned alongside Eudokiás (İplikçioğlu 2004: 104 n. 11).

[85]Churches: Machatschek and Schwarz (1981: 104–22); on the village ibid. pp. 123–5.

[86]Bayburtluoğlu (1993: 121).

[87]Brodersen (1999).

[88]Peschlow (1993: 67); Foss (1996*a*: 21).

only one gate. At 1.82 m it is so narrow, and access to it is made so difficult by repeatedly having the path leading up to it turn at right angles, that again wagon traffic cannot have been envisaged. Behind the gate began the main street of the new settlement, its walkway on the sunny northern side shadowed by a colonnade—indicating a planned development. There were two baths, small but presumably public, with at least one of them showing traces of marble revetments. Otherwise, the 'civic' monuments of the new settlement are all churches: no less than seven of them on a (roughly rectangular) site measuring only about 220 by 40 m. Perhaps one-tenth of the site was occupied by the biggest church, presumably the cathedral. The only other quite large building, dubbed a 'palace', may plausibly have been the episcopal residence, though it is not immediately adjacent to the 'cathedral'.

Writing in the early 1990s, Martin Harrison and Clive Foss both interpreted this settlement as some sort of attempt to salvage what was left of Arýkanda. Harrison considered it

> to represent the abandonment of a classical site in about the sixth century and the transfer of its greatly reduced population, perhaps fewer than one thousand persons, to a new, tightly packed, defensible but well-organized town nearby. [The new settlement] saw little building later than the sixth century. . . . it is doubtful whether it lasted much more than a century.[89]

In the same vein, Clive Foss observes that

> The site was apparently intended to replace Arýkanda by providing a new, defensible home for the bishop, civic officials, and a small population. Beside Arýkanda, it is very small indeed and it lacks the monumental public buildings of the Roman city.[90]

Both Harrison and Foss appear to me to have jumped to conclusions. A 'greatly reduced population'? The new site 'very small indeed' compared to the old? In terms of area this is no doubt true, but not necessarily in terms of inhabitants since, as we saw, the residential population even of old Arýkanda may well have been quite small. The old site of Arýkanda has not been excavated in its entirety, but it has been carefully surveyed, the result published in 1993 by Paul Knoblauch. According to this survey, remains of houses are few in number, concentrated near the square with the shops. The survey also revealed that in this part of the old settlement a late, defensive wall was built. Knoblauch speaks vaguely of a 'fortified refuge' (*Rückzugsbefestigung*) from the 'late Byzantine' period.[91] 'Late Byzantine' would mean after the turn of the millennium. However, it seems more likely that the wall was built around the same time as the settlement on the new site, and that it served not as a refuge but was permanently inhabited; the notion of a 'greatly reduced population' must be revised accordingly. The construction of not one defensive wall but two for what was originally one settlement is not unique. It is also found in Límyra, the neighbouring *pólis* about 20 km (12 miles) down the valley. Here, the settlement likewise divided, each half surrounded by its own defensive wall and separated from the other by the river Límyros (Alakir or Göksu Çayı). The layout of

[89] Harrison (2001: 46); on the new settlement in general ibid. pp. 38–46; plan of the site ibid. p. 40. Harrison died in 1992; the cited work was published posthumously.

[90] Foss (1993: 19).

[91] Knoblauch (1993: 128). It is true that houses built entirely of wood, without stone foundations, would not show up in a surface survey.

the new double settlement ignores, overrides that of the old one, whose once-splendid monuments were exploited as quarries.[92]

In none of the four instances discussed above was the new wall very strong: it would not have withstood assault by an army. Clearly, the eventuality that the builders had in mind was not large-scale warfare, but raids—by brigands, or even by troops of the central power. Lykía at the time was free from any external threat, but the mountains were presumably full of bandits, who had been a problem before. Thus, three inscriptions found near a small settlement and a kind of fort on the plateau of Elmalı (from which the Arýkandos valley leads down to the sea) congratulate certain officials for their action against robbers (*lêistaí*); they are dated to the late third century. Another inscription from the vicinity of Kibýra, just over the Lykian border in Phrygía, this one dated 527, records a petition asking for protection against the rapacity of troops stationed nearby.[93] Consistent with the thesis that the problem was 'merely' raids is the settlement on the 'island of Saint Nicholas'—so called already in Italian naval charts of the pre-Reformation period (Aya Nikola or Gemiler Adası near the famous beach of Ölüdeniz). This is a narrow, rocky island, about a kilometre long, rising steeply out of the sea just off the Lykian coast and covered with ruined houses and churches, all dated to the fifth or sixth century.[94] No fortifications are to be seen. Clearly, the narrow passage between the island and the mainland provided enough protection against the kind of raids then anticipated—whereas no danger was then anticipated from the sea.

Again in the sixth century, a monastery dedicated to the archangel Gabriel was built on a site, now called Alakilise, inland from Mýra. Nearby, about a hundred houses sprang up, probably more or less contemporaneously; abandoned for centuries, they are nevertheless in rather good condition. They are large, two-storeyed stone houses, typically about 12 × 7 m (if the ground plans furnished by Harrison are representative). Presumably the ground floor served as stables and for storing equipment; a third storey may have been built of wood, as is still often seen in older houses in the eastern Mediterranean region. Such houses would not have been inhabited by the poor. Presses for wine (as Harrison thought) or olive oil (as Hellenkemper and Hild opine) hewn into the rock indicate one likely source of revenue. The fact that the monastery and the houses all appear to have been built around the same time suggests a planned settlement here, too. Strikingly, however, in this case the houses are scattered far and wide:[95] if raids were feared, then apparently the danger was not seen as great enough to warrant the inconvenience of concentrating the houses within a defensive wall and having to carry equipment and produce over what might be quite a long distance between the houses and the plantations belonging to their occupants. Similar stone houses, probably from the same period, are also found in the vicinity of the nameless ruined monastery at Karabel-Asarcı. It is an attractive hypothesis that in both instances those houses were owned by the monastery and had something to do with its economy, rented out perhaps to tenants.[96]

[92]Foss (1996*a*: 40–1).

[93]Harrison (2001: appendix 2); Foss (1993: 19–20).

[94]Foss (1993: 17–18).

[95]Harrison (2001: 12–27) with ground plans of houses and a map showing their distribution. Cf. Hellenkemper and Hild (2004: ii 608).

[96]On the houses at Karabel-Asarcı Foss (1996*a*: 28).

That clearly wealthy, agricultural dwellings like those at Alakilise and Karabel-Asarcı were left unprotected strongly suggests that raids were really a minor problem, and may furthermore indicate that the little walled towns at Arýkanda and Límyra, or that on Saint Nicholas' island, all of which are characterized by houses close to each other, were *not* inhabited by farmers. On the island farming was pretty much impossible, and the emplacements of the two walled precincts at Arýkanda do not appear to have been chosen with a view to agricultural activities, either. Then who lived there? Administrators? Clerics? Craftsmen? Traders? Whatever the answer, it is clear that this was a new type of settlement, entirely unrelated to the pre-christian *pólis*. If unlike the *pólis* it specifically catered for persons outside the agricultural sector that would explain immediately why this kind of settlement was generally so small.

In the sixth century, the region was evidently prosperous—as was the eastern empire in general. An archaeological survey recently carried out by the University of Tübingen found the territory of the old Lykian *pólis* Kyanéai to have been densely populated at this time, covered in hamlets and farmsteads.[97] In 1963, a large hoard of silver was discovered on the Lykian coast near Kumluca. It is made up of liturgical objects with official stamps dating them to the period between about 550 and 565 and inscribed dedications showing them to have belonged to 'Siṓn' (Zion), likely meaning the great monastery of that name known to have been near Mýra. Martin Harrison identifies it with the ruin at Karabel-Asarcı—a proposal widely followed, though Hellenkemper and Hild now reject it in favour of a ruin at Alacahisar, 4 km (2.5 miles) from Karabel. At that time, the monastery had existed only for a generation or two. Yet, led by a well-connected and charismatic abbot, it was evidently very wealthy: Harrison estimates the weight of the hoard at 'several hundredweights'.[98]

Southwest Anatolia in the sixth century was palpably not a region in crisis, even if minor raids by brigands or troops of the central power were an irritant—the loss of the Kumluca silver, which I suspect was the result, precisely, of the kind of criminal activity in question, no doubt caused great annoyance to the monks of Siṓn. Not even the great plague that reached Lykía in 542 seems to have seriously undermined the prosperity of the region. But its towns evidently were in a bad way, at least if the monumental townscapes of the second century are taken as a template. It seems that at the time the population did not regret their passing. To destroy the Roman towns, no 'barbarians' from outside the empire were needed. As we saw already in the case of Athens, the splendid architectural heritage was often treated with total insouciance. The grand structures of an earlier age were adapted for new purposes without any regard for their artistic integrity, if they were not simply plundered for their building material. At some point in the mid-first millennium, one of the greatest achievements of Greek sculpture, the altar of Zeus at Pérgamon, was unceremoniously demolished to gain building material for a defensive wall (this 'altar' is really a whole architectural ensemble; in the early twentieth century, archaeologists dismantled the remains of the wall and put back together what was left of the altar, now in Berlin). There must have been a flourishing trade in columns, invariably

[97] Marksteiner (2002: 31).

[98] Harrison (2001: 37); on the Alacahisar site Hellenkemper and Hild (2004: ii 852–5). Saint Nikólaos Siônítês (Nicholas of Zion), long-time abbot of the monastery founded by his uncle, died in 564 as bishop of Pinára but was buried at Siṓn. The oldest collection of miracles of Saint Dêmḗtrios of Thessaloníkê (reporting events of late 6th- or 7th-cent. date) mentions two individual donors to the church of the saint who gave 60 and 40 pounds of silver respectively (Liebeschuetz 2001: 119).

ripped out from older structures if possible, that is if not loadbearing, and often even then. A good example is the stage wall of the theatre at Áspendos, essentially intact but with not one of the many columns once gracing it in place.

Clive Foss describes in detail[99] the ruthless treatment, during the early christian empire, of the huge cenotaph (really a building complex) of Gaius Caesar, a son of Augustus, at Límyra, where he died in 4 CE. Evidently there was not much nostalgia here for the founding dynasty of the (monocratic) empire, or at any rate it did not translate into respect for this *lieu de mémoire*. At Arýkanda, the *hêrṓi on* (a mausoleum where some public veneration of the dead person took place) of the lykiarch Hermaíos mutated into a public bath after sustaining damage in an earthquake, and in addition came to shelter shops and workshops. Tools found here attest a smithy, whereas scales and carbonized organic remains point to someone selling fruit and vegetables. The building seems to have been deserted for good after a fire. Some 40 coins of the emperor Honorius, who reigned—in the western empire!—from 395 to 423, point to a fifth-century date for that catastrophe. Strikingly, after this fire the building seems never to have been used again.[100]

Until the sixth century, Lykía and Pamphylía had always been among the safest provinces of the empire. In the seventh century, that changed. The Sasanians operated in the Mediterranean from 611 onwards, and in 622 or 623 conquered Rhodes, situated just off the Lykian coast. After the Sasanians had succumbed to the Arabs, it was the latter who, from 649 onwards, regularly attacked coastal Asia Minor. Thus, in 665, they laid siege to Síllyon in Pamphylía, but failed to capture it. In 809 (or perhaps 808 or 807), sometime 'before 965', and again in 1034, Arabs sacked Mýra.[101] Much is made of this. Thus, Clive Foss, in a manner entirely typical of the literature, insists that the seventh century was a turning point, the beginning of a major crisis. According to him, 'the sixth century was a flourishing time, perhaps the most flourishing in the entire history of the country [Lykía].' But then, suddenly, all goes wrong: 'The ravages of the Persians and Arabs, combined no doubt [?] with famine and disease, brought a complete reversal . . . , a situation in which habitation regressed, population diminished, and cities dwindled to fortresses, if they survived at all.'[102] The 'ravages' brought by foreign invaders, more particularly the Arabs, are almost universally treated as the main cause for the demise of the towns of the east Roman empire. At first sight, this hypothesis may appear attractive. But I suspect that it is wrong.

It is often emphasized that southwestern Asia Minor was on the sea route taken by the invaders to the Aegean and Constantinople. But it does not follow that the region was a frequent stopping point. The record may well be incomplete, since few written sources survive and none of them are local. Nevertheless, it is striking how few Arab landings are attested in Lykía: five in all (655, 674, 715, 809, 'before 965', and 1034; in addition, in 842 or 843 an Arab fleet sank off the Lykian coast).[103] And are we really to believe that a few Persians and Arabs, who came, perhaps quite infrequently, as plunderers, kidnappers, killers, but not as conquerors and occupiers, would have caused

[99] Foss (1996*a*: 38–9).

[100] Bayburtluoğlu (1993: 121); Kuban (1993).

[101] Foss (1993: 20); Hellenkemper and Hild (2004: i 350); Nollé (1993: 142).

[102] Foss (1993: 16, 20).

[103] Hellenkemper (1993); the 'before 965' event added in Hellenkemper and Hild (2004: i 350). For a list of Arab incursions in Anatolia in general, both naval and terrestrian, see Brandes (1989: 51–78).

the population to diminish more than the plague in the sixth century? If they brought disease, how could it have been worse than the great plague of the preceding century? How could they have brought famine? What has been said in the last chapter about the impossibility for a pre-industrial (and pre-gunpowder) army to wreak large-scale destruction was still every bit as true of the Arab invaders. Did they really bring greater insecurity than the sixth century had seen already?

The problem no doubt was not so much large-scale destruction but pinprick raids, localized looting, inhabitants carried away as slaves. This would not have done serious economic damage, the less so as precautions were readily available. For example, Saint Nicholas' island seems simply to have been abandoned. In many places in Lykía town walls were repaired after 200, for example the pre-Roman walls of Kyanéai. In Patára, new town walls were erected with reused material as in Athens; here, too, their perimeter is much smaller than that of the second-century settlement. New defensive walls of reused material were built in Andriaké (now Çayağzı), the port of Mýra, even though this port always had fortifications. The walls on the *akrópolis* of Mýra were extended. The new walls in Arýkanda and Límyra have already been mentioned.[104]

As with the late, smaller churches, dating such walls is difficult. Take the case of Sídê in Pamphylía, situated on a peninsula in the Mediterranean and surrounded by strong pre-Roman land and sea walls. A later wall of reused material and which incorporates monuments like the theatre divides the peninsula—which may either indicate that after its construction only the seaward half continued to be inhabited, or less dramatically, that the inhabitants would seek shelter there if they were attacked (of course this would still suggest a degree of depopulation, or lack of defensive resources, or both). In older literature, it is generally assumed that the bisecting wall was built in the fourth century, when the city suffered from raids by its Isaurian neighbours, and that it expanded again later, since there are post-fourth-century structures on the landward side. An inscription built into the wall records the name of the official probably responsible for it: he was *Áttios Phílippos*, *lamprótatos kómes prôtou bathmoú*. The specific combination of social rank (*lamprótatos* = *clarissimus*) and title in the imperial bureaucracy date him to the latter part of the fourth century (a *comes primi ordinis*—literally, a 'count of the first order'—would have been of lower social rank before but ranked higher, as *perfectissimus*, in the fifth century), even though the inscription itself contains no date. Neither does it specify the exact nature of the project for which it gives Áttios credit, referring only to *toúto to érgon* 'this work'. This has allowed defenders of a late date for the wall to claim that the slab is a spoil, recycled building material carrying an unrelated inscription. Clive Foss thinks that the wall was built in the seventh century, and attributes the contraction of the settlement to the Arab incursions. Johannes Nollé emphasizes that the wall is well built and high (it is indeed imposing, even though it has a decidedly makeshift look). Nollé thinks that the Arab incursions were so bad in the seventh century that the inhabitants would not have had time for such careful and extensive work and that therefore it was more probably built in the eighth century, when things had quietened down a little. On the other hand, if things were really so bad, how did the settlement manage to survive for so long, and wealthy enough to build the wall, in its absence?

[104] Kupke 1993 (Kyanéai); Foss 1996*a*: 15 (Patára); Foss 1996*a*: 32 (Andriaké); Borchhardt 1975: 47 (Mýra).

Foss and Nollé acknowledge a problem in the shape of a bath complex, adjacent to the wall but outside it, and usually assigned to the fifth century—if it was built before the wall, one would strongly expect it to have been pulled down and turned into building material. As it is, it lessened the defensive value of the wall. So did the *agorá*, a huge second-century building complex likewise just outside the wall—too close for comfort from a military point of view, as it would have given cover to prospective attackers. In the most recent piece of detective work on the bisecting wall, Hellenkemper and Hild revert to an early date—probably late fourth century. It seems more plausible that the *agorá* was preserved because it was still in service (but left outside the wall so that the enormous landward-facing stage wall of the theatre could be incorporated in it), and that the fifth-century bath was built when the wall was no longer considered necessary. And if the slab with the inscription was just used as building material, why would it have been placed in the highly visible position which it has, with the inscription right side up and facing outward? It would appear, then, that efforts to put a late date on the wall rest on a preconceived opinion concerning the gravity of the Arab danger, for which, if the early date is correct, it offers no evidence at all. In any case, whatever its date, contraction clearly occurred at last: the fifth- or sixth-century cathedral and episcopal palace on the landward half of the peninsula, generously dimensioned, were abandoned in the second half of the millennium and used as a quarry.[105]

As in Sídê, many christian-era fortifications now visible in the region may perfectly well have been built *before* the Arab incursions, as was almost certainly the case with the new settlement near Arýkanda. And even assuming that the incursions furnished the motive for building them, it does not follow that the incursions were also the reason why the towns shrank, as the fortifications in question may or may not suggest. If such fortifications are taken as an indication that the towns were emptying, that process may well have been under way before the seaborne raiders appeared. The sixth-century coins found in the new settlement near Arýkanda suggest that its fortifications were not built with Persians or Arabs in mind. Similarly, in the case of the burnt shops built into the former mausoleum of Hermaíos in old Arýkanda, the presence of so many coins from the reign of Honorius, and the absence of later coins, make it likely that the fire occurred well before anyone in the region had learned to fear Muslim attackers. Nor, in that case, was it the fault of the Arabs if the building was subsequently abandoned.

Or take the Kumluca hoard. The general view is that the silver of 'Sión' was taken by seaborne foreign raiders, that is, not before the seventh century; indeed a connection is suggested with the plundering of nearby Mýra in 809. The site of the find, near the coast, in combination with the circumstance that the monastery, if it really is identical with the ruin at Karabel-Asarcı (or Alacahisar), lies inland, according to Harrison four hours on foot from the sea, may or may not indicate seaborne raiders. Any robbers, even of local origin, might have chosen to transport the loot by boat, or perhaps they just lived on the coast; indeed one would assume that foreign raiders who chanced on the region, without any possibility of knowing if and when they might come back, were least likely to hide their loot in hopes of retrieving it later. The silver objects may have been crushed for

[105] Bean (1970: 74); Brandes (1989: 102–3); Foss (1996*b*: 43); Hellenkemper and Hild (2004: i 386–9); LdA 'Side', Liebeschuetz (1992: 7 n.); Nollé (1993: 142). On the cathedral and adjacent structures Foss (1996*b*: 40, 44) and Hellenkemper and Hild (2004: i 392–3). For the inscription, see Nollé (2001: no. 167); photographs in Hellenkemper and Hild (2004: iii figs. 341–2).

easier transport, indicating that they were not buried by their legitimate owner. There is apparently some doubt as to whether the damage, to the extent that it cannot simply be attributed to long presence in the soil, was done by the original thieves or by the finders, local farmers who sold the silver off piecemeal with no idea of its real value. However that may be, if it was buried by the legitimate owner, it is almost inconceivable that the hoard would not have been retrieved. It has also been suggested that the owner was a local 'Church of Zion' in nearby Korýdalla, even if that seems implausible given the size of the hoard.

All told, much here must remain conjectural. That means that the hoard does not make for very good evidence; once more, there simply is no compelling reason to lay the blame for this theft at the feet of the Arabs. On the contrary: if the Kumluca silver was taken in the seventh century or even later, why is none of the pieces datable to after 565? Would christians—as by the sixth century most inhabitants of Lykía were—steal from a church? The oldest collection of miracles of Saint Dêmḗtrios of Thessaloníkê, which provides information about the situation in that city in the late sixth and in the seventh centuries, reports that a large congregation was once attending a service at the church dedicated to the saint when his shrine appeared to be on fire. Fearing that in the resulting confusion *the treasure of the church might be pillaged* (evidently, by members of the congregation!), word was given out that the city was being attacked—to distract the crowd, which rushed to man the walls; as it turned out, the city was indeed being attacked, and while the fire was put out and the treasure saved, the whole affair ended up being credited to the saint.[106]

Clear evidence of damage done by the raiders is lacking throughout; much of what evidence is cited is ambiguous or indeed spurious. An inscription at the Alakilise monastery records laconically that 'the consecration of the most venerable sanctuary of the holy archangel Gabriel took place on 2 May of the year 6320 since the creation of the world [812 CE]' (this is the usual chronology of the eastern empire and church, which in 691 officially declared the creation to have taken place on 1 September 5509 BCE). In fact, as the monastery already existed since the sixth century, it was really reconsecrated, following extensive rebuilding that is evident from the remains. One would dearly like to know what motivated the monks to undertake this work, but the slab, undamaged and *in situ*, supplies no further information. It is tempting to see a connection with the sack of Mýra only a few years earlier, since Mýra is not far distant and the monastery would have made a likely target for raiders—yet Hellenkemper and Hild, unfortunately without discussing their evidence for this, state that the rebuilding was apparently (*offenbar*) necessitated by an earthquake. Even assuming that the monastery was sacked, we then have to conclude that the monks apparently did not suffer any grave economic setback, or they would not have been able to undertake such a big project so quickly—the rebuilding was on much the same scale as before.[107]

At Mýra, the extant church built over the tomb of its fourth-century saintly bishop, Nicholas, stands on the foundations of the east end of a larger church probably built in the sixth century, apparently a vaulted basilica. The length of that older church is unknown since the western part has not been excavated—but it was certainly bigger

[106] Liebeschuetz (2001: 118).

[107] Hellenkemper and Hild (2004: ii 608–9); the inscription is in Grégoire (1922: no. 286) (photograph in Harrison 2001: fig. 48 and Hellenkemper and Hild 2004: iii fig. 171).

than the smallish present church, which (without the exonarthex) only measures about 20 × 20 m. Urs Peschlow, the author of a detailed study of this church, thinks that on the strength of the physical and stylistic evidence alone the present church would appear to be of eighth-century date. In that case, the replacement of the original large church with the present smaller one would have nothing to do with the sack of Mýra in 809, which it would have survived without major damage. However, Peschlow does not rule out the possibility that the rebuilding took place after 809 and because of the Arab attack.

Then what about the Arab attack of 1034? There is at Mýra a slab of marble engraved with the words 'restored by/under [*epí*] the lord Constantine [IX] and the *augoústa* [empress] Zôḗ in the year 6551 [1042/43 CE]'. Apparently discovered in a local cemetery in the nineteenth century, the inscription does not say *what* was restored; the idea that it refers to the church of Saint Nicholas is merely based on the notion that the ruling couple would not have bothered with anything less than this pilgrimage site. (Moreover, we know that Constantine IX around this very time also had the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem rebuilt under the terms of an agreement with the caliph, who controlled that city.) But in fact the grammar of the inscription is ambiguous: it could equally well refer to work undertaken *by* Constantine and Zôḗ and to work merely carried out during their reign. The vulgar spelling, which follows the actual pronunciation rather than the 'classical' usage retained by educated writers, and the irregularly shaped letters appear somewhat at odds with the imperial patronage theory. This has not stopped for example Clive Foss from treating this slab as evidence that the church suffered in the 1034 Arab attack to the point of attracting imperial intervention—even though Peschlow (cited by Foss) is positive that according to the evidence of the actual fabric of the church no building activity took place at that time at all.[108]

As far as I can determine, there simply is no conclusive evidence that the depopulation of the towns of Lykía and Pamphylía began only in the seventh century (as Foss for example argues). Nor is there conclusive evidence that the depopulation of the towns, to the extent that it really did take place from the seventh century onwards, was solely or even in the main the result of the Persian and Arab incursions. The incursions may well have accelerated the process, but that is no doubt equally true of the plague in the sixth century. How many people really still lived in the ancient towns when the Arab incursions, on which their decay is blamed, began? At Pérgê in Pamphylía, the archaeological evidence indicates that after the middle of the millennium only the *akrópolis* was still inhabited. It occupies a hill only about 50 m high, but whose steep slopes make it almost inaccessible—except on one side, where it falls off gently to the settlement proper. Curiously, the *akrópolis* seems never to have been walled. The lower city has imposing pre-Roman fortifications. But since, by the sixth century, it seems to

[108] *anekenísthi* [the 'correct' spelling would be *anekainísthê*] *epí Kônstantínou despótou kai Zôḗs augoústês étei 's(ph)na'*—where (ph) = ϕ. Grégoire (1922: no. 291, with information also about the provenance of the slab and the form of the letters). Both the Alakilise inscription of 812 and those (to be discussed in the next section) of the early 9th cent. recording imperial intervention in Antalya have regular-shaped letters and 'classical' spelling. That the inscription does not call Constantine *basileús* or *autokrátôr* is presumably explained by the fact that he owed his position to his marriage with Zôḗ. Because the year began on 1 September, the year given in the inscription may correspond to either 1042 or 1043 CE. Peschlow's study on the church of Saint Nicholas is in Borchhardt (1975: 303–97). On the predecessor of the present church ibid. pp. 323, 342, 347; on the problem of dating the present church, and the 1042/43 marble slab, ibid. p. 347; cf. Foss (1996*a*: 34).

have been largely empty, the walls could no longer have been manned for defence, leaving the *akrópolis* exposed. Either, then, the situation was not dangerous enough to warrant new fortifications to shut off the *akrópolis* from the lower city, or the inhabitants were too few to make the effort worthwhile.[109]

The general assumption that the towns were abandoned because they became too dangerous in light of the incursions is, at best, no more plausible than its opposite: that the danger was not great enough to warrant staying in the towns, with their defensive walls, when for some other reason they were no longer seen as desirable places to live. After all, if the existence and prosperity of towns had depended on the absence of raiders, Mediterranean civilization could never have evolved, since it did not originally come complete with a Roman empire to protect it. Furthermore, a great monastery like the one at Alakilise was as attractive to raiders as a settlement. Yet clearly the monks of Saint Gabriel stayed where they were; nor did their monastery shrink—whether or not the rebuilding completed in 812 was necessitated by violent destruction. Nor did they ever invest in fortifications—as far as I can see no monastery in the region did.

Even as a ruin, the most impressive extant church in the region is that at Dereağzı, a remote location in the mountainous hinterland of Mýra. (The church, built on the usual cruciform plan with a central cupola, has a length of 38 m, while the width of the three-aisled nave is 21 m. Flanking towers give the west front a width of 31 m. On both sides of the church and linked to it, there are octagonal annexes; with them the total width of the building is 45 m. There were ancillary residential structures.) Unfortunately, there is no epigraphic or other written information about this site, of ninth- or tenth-century date. We only know about it what the stones, examined very thoroughly by archaeologists, tell us. The stylistic and material evidence in this case points strongly to Constantinople. '[I]t seems likely that someone in the imperial capital was involved in the conception and probably to some extent the construction and adornment of the complex.' Indeed, the archaeologists have concluded that the very bricks, 'and maybe the granite', were imported from the region near Constantinople, some 500 km (300 miles) distant even as the crow flies! Close by and evidently built around the same time is a substantial fortress (roughly triangular, it measures about 180 × 150 × 90 m). This clearly was sponsored by 'someone in the imperial capital', too. Yet, strikingly, the church, although within sight of the fortress, is too distant for the garrison to protect it if the fortress was attacked: a possibility about which those who built all this appear not to have been too worried; nor does there appear to be any evidence that the church ever suffered serious damage other than progressive decay.[110]

3.2.1.2 *Why did the Roman towns perish?*

The province of Lykía-Pamphylía in the early part of the first millennium contained dozens of substantial towns, all of them apparently wealthy, and especially those in the coastal plain of Pamphylía. Of all those towns in the former twin province, by the end of the millennium only one was left: Attáleia. The historic centre of present-day Antalya, by far the biggest city in the region even now, is situated on the coast, but on heights that fall off steeply to the sea. In peaceful times, the people who had to transport goods from the harbour into the city must have cursed the steep incline. But it protected the city against

[109] Bean (1970: 47); Brandes (1989: 104); Foss (1996*b*: 19).

[110] On the church Morganstern (1983) (quotations at p. 169); on the fortress Morganstern (1993).

attacks from the sea—which by the seventh century meant a big comparative advantage, not perhaps because such attacks were so dangerous but because, in combination with the presence of an excellent natural harbour, it recommended the city to the central power as a good site for stationing its warships.

Antalya no longer has pre-christian civic monuments visible above ground, an oddity in this region. Nor has it even been possible to determine the site of monuments like the theatre. As is usually the case with Roman towns in western Europe, the city centre is densely built up with what are in part historical structures themselves and cannot easily be excavated. Aside from a large ruined church (about 36 × 28 m) built in the fifth or sixth century, the pre-Turkish monuments of Antalya consist almost entirely of fortifications. The curious harbour walls appear to protect the city from its own harbour: if attackers managed to seize the harbour, they would find themselves wedged in between the water and the base of those walls, which denied them access to the city itself, situated on the heights above them. But the land walls, too, were imposing, as are their extant remains. In part, they probably date back to the founding of the city by king Áttalos II of Pérgamon in about 150 BCE, but they were rebuilt (if also shortened) in the late Roman period and then again in the Seldjuk era (thirteenth/fourteenth century).[111]

Work carried out on the walls in the tenth century is the subject of several verse inscriptions set into them. In the oldest from the year 909/10, the 'townspeople of the splendid city of the Attalians [*astoí póleôs lamprás Attaliéôn*]' found themselves called upon to pray for the soul of the *droungários* (a military rank) Stéphanos Abástaktos, to whom, it claims, they owed the strengthening of their city walls. An inscription from the following year praises the *autokrátôr* Léôn (VI), who, it explains, with fatherly care (*pronoía patrikḗ*, dative) and for the welfare of this christian ('Christ-loving') city wisely caused a second wall to be built (*kai tḗnde sṓzôn tên philóchriston pólin/sophôs katôchýrôse teíchei deutérô*). This second wall was an outer curtain, presumably separated from the main wall by a moat as in the case of the land walls of Constantinople; the inscription emphasizes that thanks to the new wall the city was now safe from siege engines (*échthrôn pása mêchanḗ*). A certain Euphḗmios, apparently a court official, is praised for overseeing the project. But apparently the second wall was not yet finished, for an inscription of 915/16 also praises Léôn's son and successor, Constantine (VII), the regent Zôḗ, and a military person whose name is illegible for its erection. According to this inscription, the wall was built 'to the glory of Christ, as an object of pride for the Romans, and to ward off the godless sons of Hagar', that is the Arabs (*eis dóxan Christoú kai kaúchêma Rhômaíôn/kai katatropḗn tôn dysebṓn* [*sic*] *Agárôn*).[112]

The reference to the Arabs suggests that the danger emanating from them was not considered over when the church at Dereağzı was built but not fortified. No more than they destroyed that church did the Arabs ever seize Attáleia, either before or after the erection of the new wall; but it did not stop the Turks from doing so repeatedly after the turn of the millennium. It is worth noting that, as was also most likely the case with

[111] Bean (1970: 33); Hellenkemper and Hild (2004: i 332–6).

[112] Grégoire (1922: nos. 302–4); for a photograph of nos. 302 and 304, see Hellenkemper and Hild (2004: iii fig. 62). The readings are in part uncertain; they are discussed in Grégoire. Hagar: concubine of Abraham, who later sent her away into the desert with her son Ismael (Genesis 16.1–16, 21.9–33). Her alleged tomb in Mecca is an islamic shrine. Euphḗmios is described as *tou krátous mystográphos*; cf. ch. 1 n. 9.

the church and fortress at Dereağzı, a big project like this was undertaken by the central power and not by local actors. No doubt it is the quality of the site that enabled Attáleia to prevail, in the second half of the millennium, in the competition for the attention of the central power that was vital for its survival as a city. Its potential rivals Áspendos, Pérgê, and Síllyon were too far from the sea. Sídê, which was probably the more important city well into the christian period, also has imposing walls and a good site. But it is less easy to defend against attacks from the sea—the peninsula on which it is situated is flat on one side (on the other side there are low cliffs), and the harbour is not situated in a bay, but in an exposed position at the tip of the peninsula. Artificially created, it kept silting up on account of strong coastal currents; 'being in charge of the port of Sídê' was a proverbial expression for a never-ending task. Moreover, the prevailing winds made it difficult to put into. At some point in the second half of the millennium, it was at last abandoned.[113]

Eventually, the settlement was abandoned, too, possibly in connection with a fire in the tenth century. In Turkish, the site is still called Eski Antalya, Old Antalya, supposedly because the inhabitants left it for Attáleia. That story, told by the twelfth century at the latest,[114] is interesting because the distance between Sídê and Attáleia is considerable (some 65 km or 40 miles as the crow flies)—apparently, townspeople, if they did not want to live in the countryside, found no nearer alternative, all other Pamphylian towns being more or less dead by then. Inversely, perhaps the early depopulation of Pérgê was actually caused by its *closeness* to Attáleia. Sídê, not Pérgê, may have acquired the name 'Old Attáleia' because it held out longer. Indeed, its generous fifth- or sixth-century monuments, such as the bath complex just outside the bisecting wall (relatively well-preserved, it now serves as the site's museum) and the cathedral and bishop's palace, indicate a late prosperity somewhat unusual for the region; this was presumably connected with its being the seat of high-ranking imperial officials like Áttios Phílippos. It seems that in a situation where the 'demand' for towns had diminished greatly, the few towns that were still needed grew at the expense of those in a less-privileged position. Essentially, the towns that still flourished did so because the central power spent money there, and given limited resources that was possible only for the few towns offering an especially advantageous location.

By the eighth century, Attáleia was one of two main naval bases of the eastern empire, the other of course being Constantinople. However, the city was favoured not only by its position on the coast but also with regard to the overland roads. To get from the west coast of Asia Minor to the south coast or vice versa, one could go by sea. But especially going north from the south coast, one was likely to be hampered by the prevailing winds and currents, as was the ship that, in 62, the apostle Paul boarded at Mýra for Rome.[115] The land route along the west coast was made arduous by the fact that the Taúros mountains often come right down to the sea. If, therefore, something (say, troops) was to be moved on land from western to southern Asia Minor, it was better to cross the Taúros to the Anatolian plateau in the interior and then cross the mountains again to get back to the coast. This was actually faster than the sea route, and (important no doubt also

[113] Nollé (1993: 25–7).

[114] Bean (1970: 74). Foss (1996*b*: 46) adduces an Arab source of 1118 and a French one of 1191 which indicate that the story was already told then. Variants of the name 'Old Attáleia'—including in Greek and Italian—are recorded from then on (Hellenkemper and Hild 2004: ii 378–9).

[115] Acts 27.5–7.

for couriers carrying messages) the time of arrival could be estimated more reliably. But going down from western Asia Minor to the south coast, one would cross the mountains in such a way as to reach the south coast at Attáleia, since from there if one wanted to go further east one could follow the coast—unlike the west coast, on the south coast the mountains are much less of an obstacle.

When the *póleis* of Pérgê, Sídê, etc. were founded, they were autarchic. The overland route through the Taúros to the faraway west coast was of little importance to them. But it was important to king Áttalos, whose capital, Pérgamon, *was* on (or at any rate near) the west coast. It seems obvious that when he founded Attáleia, he chose the site precisely because of its accessibility from his distant capital: it provided him with a foothold on the south coast that was not only easy to defend, but also easy to reach by both land and sea. As it happens, the same overland route that led from Attáleia to Pérgamon also led to Constantinople. Evidently, the city was favoured by the central power in Constantinople on account of the same strategic factors that led king Áttalos to found it in the first place. However, in a de-urbanized society that no longer needed many towns, unlike the situation in Áttalos' day that (and not primarily the Arab incursions) now meant the demise of Pérgê, Sídê, etc.

The great (and in part, for the period, very big) cities of the late east Roman empire were cities with walls that impress even now. Warren Treadgold lists ten cities that he thinks had more than 10,000 inhabitants in the eighth century: Constantinople (some 100,000), Thessaloníkê (over 50,000), and in the second league Hadrianople (Edirne), Amório n (on the Anatolian plateau, later abandoned), Ánkyra (Ankara), Attáleia, Éphesos, Níkaia (İznik), Smýrna (İzmir), and Trapezús (Trabzon).[116] Whatever the reliability of the figures, no doubt those were the main cities of the empire, whereas other towns probably looked markedly more humble than even a small settlement like Arýkanda had done in the second century—if they had not in fact been abandoned. However, the presence of strong walls, though necessary, was not enough to ensure survival, as attested by cities like Pérgê and Sídê—once magnificent but dead by the end of the millennium, despite their splendid fortifications. If what they had to offer was good, nevertheless their neighbour Attáleia outdid them. It was not the necessity of defence as such that brought the end of other towns, but the demise of the towns left those few that combined the most assets.

It would, thus, be an error to attribute the decline of the towns to the 'decline' or 'decadence' of the empire, or, in the west, to its disappearance. Even in the west, the decline of the towns began well before the empire ended, and it continued in the east even where the empire subsisted. Nor did the decline of the towns necessarily weaken the empire. After all, in the east it survived the terminal crisis of the towns that began in the third century for over a millennium: too long for the fate of the towns to explain its own decline. The twelfth-century eastern empire was not weak because its towns were less prosperous than in the second century. To grasp this, we need only look at its successor, the Ottoman empire. No one would call the Ottoman empire in the fifteenth, sixteenth, or seventeenth century weak. But its towns, in Asia Minor, were not much changed from the twelfth century. Indeed, it perpetuated the old christian empire in almost every respect but religion. It was still highly centralized, with resources accumulating in the capital. There, spectacular monuments like the Blue Mosque or the Süleymaniye self-consciously

[116] Treadgold (1997: 405).

imitated the Hagía Sophía. In the provinces, however, nothing much happened. Antalya, for example, continued to flourish, but physically seems to have remained much as it was. Nor was there any renewal for the less important towns.

The comparison with the Ottoman empire in its heyday corroborates the impression that by the second half of the first millennium the fate of the Roman empire, or what remained of it, had become de-linked from the fate of its towns. It managed without them. But why did the towns decline in the first place, and why was that process irreversible? The answer, I think, is that, far from the decline of the towns being caused by the decline of the empire, it was the empire itself that caused the decline of the towns. As long as the empire existed, they could not recover: there was room only for the capital and some major provincial centres. This is why they never did recover in Asia Minor or the Balkans, either before or after 1453: it was immaterial to the fate of the towns whether the rulers in Constantinople spoke Greek or Turkish. Conversely, if the towns recovered in the west, it was because there was no empire to hamper them—just as, originally, the towns of the old Mediterranean civilization had sprung up in the absence of any empire. However, as we shall see, the new towns of Latin christendom were radically different from the old in terms of social organization, even when they occupied the same site.

How did the empire hamper the towns? It did not much aggravate them at first, but began to do so when it entered its great crisis in the third century. When the central power turned from a benevolent, detached hegemon into an exploiter, the towns were trapped in the empire. As Aílios Aristeídês already observed in his speech on the empire of 143, *állôs ou léleiptai zên*, 'there is no other life left'.[117] The towns were now weakened by growing fiscal pressure from the central power, growing attractiveness of the court and the administrative apparatus of the central power for the elite, whose outlook had hitherto been more local, growing attractiveness also of the church, whose mental horizon likewise was not local, and the general insecurity. But what I suspect was more important still was the homogenization brought about by the unification of the Mediterranean world in the Roman empire and then intensified further by the imposition of christianity as its mandatory religion.

The *raison d'être* of the towns of the pre-christian Mediterranean world was the solidarity of the local landowners. The Roman empire did not protect the towns so much as it made them redundant: the solidarity of the local landowners with each other became superfluous as a result of integration in the empire. That explains why in the middle third of the first millennium the towns went downhill everywhere, whether or not they remained part of the empire. The latter aspect was relatively unimportant for the fate of the towns, because even where the empire withdrew, the church did not. In an important sense, therefore, society remained universal in outlook where, previously, its outlook had been strictly local. The universalist structures of both the empire and, perhaps even more significant, the church made the demise of the specific type of autarchic local structures of which the towns had been an expression, and without which they could not be maintained, inevitable. It was only after this demise of the old towns had taken place that, in Latin christendom after the turn of the millennium, towns of a radically new type arose; they could not have done so before the old structures were gone.

Unlike the new towns of Latin christendom, the towns of the pre-christian Mediterranean world were, in principle, reserved for the local population. They did not take

[117] Aílios Aristeídês, *Eis Rhômên* 66.

in anyone else, at least not as citizens, let alone landowners—the two, however, being difficult to distinguish. Conversely, their citizens could not easily move somewhere else, at least not without losing their property and status. Citizens, the local elite, were almost inextricably tied to, and dependent on, the local community into which they were born. Maybe life was better elsewhere, but it was not an option (except for colonists founding new towns, which must have become increasingly difficult as available land was claimed—for example as royal land, *basilikḗ chṓra*, of the post-Persian Greek rulers). What was an option was to improve life for the local community.

Yet in the Roman empire of the first or second century CE, the landowners, especially the greater landowners, no longer needed the solidarity of their peers. Evidently, an Opramóas did not rely on the help or protection of his fellow citizens, though the opposite may still have been true. Opramóas actually held the citizenship of more than one Lykian *polis*—Rhodiápolis (where he was apparently buried), Korýdalla (Kumluca), Patára (one of the documents on his presumed mausoleum records the conferral of the citizenship of this *pólis*), and presumably Mýra, too (where, as in Patára, according to his inscription he held the office of agonothete). This shows that, unlike in the old *pólis*-world, an outsider (which he must have been in each of the towns listed but one) was no longer distrusted but courted, at least if he was as rich as Opramóas. As a result, the borders between one *pólis* and the next became permeable—in this case only within the framework of the *koinón tôn Lykíôn*, but the phenomenon is still remarkable. Indeed, Opramóas did not even need the Lykian league. If push came to shove, he could appeal to Rome—as his colleague Iásôn did. People like Opramóas or Iásôn benefited their fellow citizens in the conventional, time-honoured manner, if perhaps on an unconventional scale. But they no longer did so because they had a vital interest in the welfare of the local community of which they were members.

And where did the estates of an Opramóas, which must have been very extensive, come from? They cannot have been situated on the territory of a single *pólis*. Although there is no proof, it is at least probable that within the Lykian league both *énktêsis*, the acquistion of property in the territory of another *pólis*, and *epigamía*, marriage with someone from another *pólis* without loss of citizenship and the right to inherit for the children, were allowed.[118] But someone as wealthy as Opramóas may well have had property even outside Lykía. What, for example, had happened to the *basilikḗ chṓra* of the post-Persian Greek rulers? Who profited from it when they were gone? The royal land of Áttalos II—who did not control Lykía, but much of the wider region, like Pamphylía, where he founded Attáleia—became *ager publicus*, common property of the Roman people, on the death of his successor in 133 BCE, but what happened to it later? Such vast holdings must have offered great opportunities to those who were already rich anyway, leaving them with estates which were no longer part of the old *pólis*-dominated structures—even if each individual property could perhaps still nominally be linked to some local community. Or take a rich province like Gaul, where compared to the eastern Mediterranean basin there must have been a relative abundance of fertile land. How was it distributed, what constraints governed its acquisition?

I have emphasized the significance of the modalities of property ownership for the history of the *pólis*-world—an aspect that it seems to me has been neglected by historians. The evolution of those modalities is no doubt of similar importance for understanding the

[118] Behrwaldt (2000: 225–6).

development of the Roman empire. Given the dimensions of this issue in space and time, it was not possible to research it in any detail for this study. But I would be surprised if the freedom of movement in the Roman empire did not undermine the dependence on, and the attachment to, the existing local structures, including, sooner or later, the monopoly of the native population, or part of it, to landownership in their community. I suspect that this monopoly at last disappeared everywhere in the empire, be it *de jure* or *de facto*, and although this development perhaps did not occur everywhere at the same time.

The organization of the Roman towns in the early part of the first millennium tended to become uniform throughout the empire: the *decuriones* became more powerful and, at least de facto, hereditary.[119] But if the elite of the towns, in league with the central power, had a monopoly on running the towns in any case, then it became superfluous to defend the monopoly of land ownership of the local citizens within the territory of their community. The elite could hardly deny the right of landownership to the less wealthy citizens, even if many poorer citizens perhaps were mere tenants now—if (as seems the case) the wealth of the elite came largely from rents, the tenants must have been many. In any case, since the poorer citizens could no longer hope to play any political role in their community, it did not matter to the elite whether the small landowners of their community were native to it, or indeed whether they were citizens at all. At the same time, upholding the exclusive right to landownership of the native population would, inconveniently, have precluded members of the elite themselves from acquiring additional land outside their home community, by purchase, marriage, or inheritance.

By the second century, the old particularism that set each local community of citizens clearly apart from its neighbours was evidently breaking up. By that time, in the words of Aílios Aristeídês, already quoted, a traveller in the empire would move *ek patrídos eis patrída*, from one home community to another. According to Claudian, also quoted earlier, people owed to Rome *quod sedem mutare licet*, literally 'that it is possible to change residence'—something which nowadays we may take for granted, but which around the year 400 still seemed remarkable to the poet. At the same time, even though still worthy of note, it had clearly become normal.[120] But if everybody could live where they wanted, then they would move where life was best—not immediately, but by and by, a gradual demographic transformation that might, however, be accelerated by certain factors. Life was *not* necessarily best in the towns, especially not those in a difficult location (like Termêssós). The disappearance of internal barriers in the empire, the obsolescence, in light of the *pax Romana*, of the towns as providers of protection and mutual support, and the fact that trade, which favours towns, was then of relatively limited economic and social importance, necessarily meant that from now on the towns only prospered to the extent that they offered amenities, paid for by the elite. They were, actually, already redundant in the glorious second century, but they were still pleasant. Once the elite turned away from them, and life in the countryside, less affected by the crisis of the third century and its lasting consequences, became more attractive than urban life, their long-term fate was sealed.

In the second century, although the great landowners no longer needed the towns, they still considered them a worthwhile cause. The weight of tradition must have played

[119] Reynolds (1988: 25–8); Liebeschütz (1992: 2).

[120] Aílios Aristeídês, *Eis Rhṓmên* 100; Claudian, *De consulatu Stilichonis* 3.156.

a role here, and no doubt many of the rich enjoyed basking in the formalized gratitude of their fellow citizens, captured in honorary decrees such as those inscribed on the presumptive mausoleum of Opramóas. But in the great crisis of the following century, the divorce between the interests of the rich and the interests of the towns at last became both apparent and final. The tradition of euergetism broke off and, since its foundations had disappeared, could not be restored. Ostentatious patronage of the type practised by Opramóas became inadvisable. Saddled with the burden of having to run an empire that used largely to run itself, the central power was now desperate for funds, and insatiable. Only a fool would now advertise the fact that he had money to give away like Opramóas did. In fact, wealth was still given away, but to the church rather than the secular local community, and in more discreet fashion. Siőn monastery, in the sixth century, received several hundredweights of silver within the space of perhaps a generation at most: money that 400 years earlier might have paid for public amenities was here tied up in liturgical plate. It was no longer the towns that attracted gifts of surplus wealth, it was the church, and as Siőn or the monastery of Saint Gabriel demonstrate, the church operated in the countryside at least as much as in the dwindling towns.

In such circumstances, the attractiveness of the towns decreased in what may have been a self-reinforcing process. The more the towns decayed for lack of patronage, the less incentive was there to live there. Each new threat to which the towns were more exposed than the countryside intensified the phenomenon: the general insecurity and harrassment by the central power in the third century, the continuing pressure from the central power (which squeezed the towns for what they were worth) in the fourth and fifth centuries, the plague in the sixth century, incursions like those of the Persians and Arabs in the seventh and eighth centuries.

The question of the modalities of property ownership is linked to that of the evolution of citizenship. The inscription recording the rebuilding of the theatre at Patára in the second century notes that the sponsor, Quintus Velius Titianus, was a citizen of this *pólis*. But it is likely that the importance of local citizenship was already in decline by that time, and it may at length even have disappeared (unfortunately, again it was not possible to research this question in the context of this study). The inscription of Stéphanos Abástaktos, in the early tenth century, speaks of Attáleia as a *pólis*, but addresses its intended readers as *astoí* 'townspeople, city-dwellers', instead of referring to them as *polítai* or, more inclusive-sounding and more popular, *dêmos,* as no doubt would still have been the case in the second century. (For example, second-century inscriptions at Arýkanda routinely refer to *ho dêmos Arykandéôn* or *Arykandéôn ho dêmos.*)[121] The loss of a separate right of citizenship for each local community, or at least the decline of its importance, meant that the rural population ceased to be linked to the central, more or less urban site of the *pólis*. If that site decayed, then, it was the result essentially of a restructuring of society reflecting a universalizing, delocalizing tendency. The universal community of empire and church dissolved the substrate on which the local community of old had flourished.

It need not have been the case that the population of the towns went very far, if indeed it went anywhere at all. We should remember how small many of the Roman towns must have been, even if they boasted magnificent civic monuments. If we assume the population of Lykía to have been about 200,000, then the 36 towns of the Lykian league would have

[121] Şahin (1994).

had an average of under 6,000 inhabitants. In reality, the number of towns was actually greater, even though towns not members of the league are likely to have been very small. Moreover, the 36 members of the league were not of equal size: while some no doubt had substantially more than 5,000 or 6,000 inhabitants, others had correspondingly fewer. Finally, 200,000 was the total population of the country, not the 'urban' population. While those 200,000 people no doubt were mostly associated with a *pólis*, if only because they lived on its territory, they did not all live in the towns proper, far from it. For example, the elder Pliny (first century CE) includes Kyanéai among the thirty or so *celeberrima oppida* or best-known towns of Lykía. Recent archaeological research has permitted to establish its actual population with some confidence: never more than about 1,000 people in the central settlement either in the post-Persian or in the Roman period, with another 5,000 or so in the surrounding *chôra* that was administratively part of the *pólis* (figures that happen nicely to corroborate the average of 6,000 just calculated).[122] Arýkanda, with its splendid monuments on a spectacular site, was perhaps quite typical: the number of people living on that central site may have been just a few hundred even in the second century. In other words, if, from the third century onwards, we note a marked decline of that site, it was not necessarily, or primarily, because people had moved away, but simply because the central site of the old *pólis* ceased to be the focus of their communal life.

To the extent that foreign invaders can be held responsible for the decay of the towns of the eastern empire, it was not so much because of their direct impact on the towns themselves, but because of their impact on the empire as such. Mýra being sacked three times in the space of over 200 years seems insufficient to explain any major decline, especially considering that at least in the two tenth- and eleventh-century raids its main church suffered no structural damage. But the empire as such had to face invaders like the Arabs more or less annually, and devote a great deal of resources to fending them off. Given its generally defensive posture (if it took any territory, that territory had previously belonged to it, and would usually still be largely christian), there was not much revenue from booty, so those resources had to be taken from its own population. The other great recipient of resources was the church, exempt from taxation; but whereas the empire at least maintained some large towns, the church did not invest in towns as such at all. If the situation of Asia Minor in the seventh or eighth century seems markedly worse than in the sixth century, it is no doubt because of the drain on resources caused in the first instance by the empire itself rather than by its foreign adversaries, whose indirect impact was greater than the local damage that they might cause.

The towns continued to be trapped. Left to its own devices, autarchic in the manner of the pre-christian *pólis* that it had once been, Mýra might have recovered easily from occasional attacks—just as, during the Indian summer of the second century, it rose more splendid than before from the 'cosmic' earthquake of 141, which caused sponsors like Opramóas and Iásôn to finance the erection of its magnificent theatre. But it could not regain its former prosperity and self-confidence in a situation where any surplus resources were mopped up by the empire on the one hand, the church on the other, with a general, chronic scarcity of resources probably resulting in a persistently depressed economic situation both locally and in the empire as a whole. Anyway, the old *pólis* was gone by that time, and in a homogenized, delocalized society could not be reconstituted. This must be one major reason why no recovery of the towns took place in the west, either,

[122] Pliny, *Naturalis historia* 5.28.101; Kolb and Thomsen (2004: 37, 40–1).

even though there was no more empire. Thus, sixth- and seventh-century Spain shows no signs of urban renewal despite the fact that, ruled rather loosely by the Visigoths (and the local bishops and abbots), it was free from any foreign threat. Indeed, there was further, if gradual, cultural decline. Throughout the country the architecture of the estates of the great Roman landowners, whose splendour had reached a peak in the fourth century, decayed, with primitive alterations reminiscent of what happened to the towns—state apartments transformed into workshops, abandoned wings given over to burials, the family mausoleum converted into a church.[123] Clearly, absent thriving towns the old cultural standards (and ambitions) could not be maintained even in a generally peaceful environment.

Where the empire and/or the church held sway, the long-term effect was de-urbanization, a rural mode of life—in the east as much as in the west. In the eastern empire just as in the west, the towns decayed, indeed were abandoned. After about 300, in the east as in the west, churches and fortifications, the only great construction projects from then on, were often situated away from the towns, in the countryside. In Lykía, the monasteries of Sión or Saint Gabriel, or the great complex of Dereağzı—a green-field site in the middle of nowhere: what settlement existed there was always small—all illustrate this phenomenon. It is likewise found in the west. Although, in the late first millennium, western towns with episcopal sees did have cathedrals of substantial size (cathedrals of the period in Germany or France were, on average, noticeably larger than all but the greatest eastern churches of any period—an indication, incidentally, of the wealth and technical resources of the church as an organization), they were rivalled in physical appearance and local influence by great monasteries dotted about the countryside. The library of Saint Gall abbey in what is now Switzerland preserves the famous plan, drawn in the 820s, of an ideal Benedictine abbey of the period: this shows a profusion of outbuildings (some forty) clustered village-like around a huge stone church in what is evidently meant to be a rural setting.

3.2.2 Particularism and universalism in the west

If, in the pithy formulation of Wolfgang Liebeschuetz, 'power moved to the countryside',[124] it was because the Roman empire, and the universal church which without that empire could not have come into existence, had unified what was then western civilization. Empire and church together brought about a truly epochal change. I have emphasized that pre-christian Mediterranean civilization was essentially an urban phenomenon: it was based on towns, on which the bulk even of the rural population was focused, and unimaginable without them. By the middle of the first millennium, however, we have entered a new world, the vast bulk of whose inhabitants had no link with any towns. Western civilization went rural—and in important respects stayed rural until the industrial age, notwithstanding the fact that in Latin christendom a new type of towns arose and impacted strongly on the development of social and political structures. By then, however, basic structures were in place that evolved at a time when there were no towns of any significance—structures that could no longer be easily removed or even modified in their essence.

[123] Liebeschuetz (2001: 91–4).
[124] Liebeschuetz (1992: 25).

According to Georges Duby, no civilization in world history has been 'more profoundly rural than, at bottom, [west European] medieval civilization was'. Speaking of the ninth and tenth centuries, he observes that 'in the [west European] civilization of that period, the country is everything. . . . All men, even the richest, the bishops, the kings themselves . . . , all remain country-dwellers.'[125] In Latin (and also in Greek) christendom supralocal rule now operated essentially without towns. This was possible because the particularist organization of the pre-christian Mediterranean civilization, based on towns, had been replaced by a universalist, centralized organization. Or two, to be exact, with Constantinople and Rome as its respective hubs. In the east, empire and church were both centralized. In the west, only the church was, not the system of secular rule. But this made the church even more important: unlike in the east, after the demise of the towns (or in their absence, since much of northern Europe had never yet had them), secular rule in the west was only possible thanks to the universal organization of the church, and in alliance with it.

Grown up within the shell of the Roman empire, the church partially replaced both the local and the central structures of the empire—taking over from the municipalities with their *decuriones* on the local level in many practical ways, but also managing christian society as a whole in terms of spiritual (including political) guidance, complete with sanctions. No longer in need of the towns, it disposed of a vast organizational and communications network that reached the most remote village and yet remained under central control. The church held more land, and from it derived more revenue, than anyone else. In the Latin west, the church alone knew how to read, write, and do sums—which was enormously important not because it mattered greatly how many people could or could not read Vergil or the bible, but because it enabled the church to keep administrative records. Moreover, to read and write at the time meant knowledge of Latin. Vernacular languages, being non-standardized and subject to regional variation, were more difficult to write in, and though some people did so, they invariably mastered Latin first. Vernacular languages might also lack technical vocabulary, and even if they did not, would not be understood by non-natives, that is, in the wider christian world. If one wanted to speak to the wider world, one needed Latin, and it was taught by the church. For a long time, secular power-holders remained dependent on the assistance of the church, which, in the west, alone possessed the necessary administrative (including, in this case, linguistic) skills to run any kind of complex organization. Not for nothing is the English word 'clerk' derived from 'cleric', and 'clerical' still a synonym for 'administrative'. Such linguistic survivals are one indication of how deeply ingrained certain patterns that evolved in the period under consideration became.

The fact that alliance with the church made it vastly easier to run a kingdom cannot have been the least motive for the relative ease with which 'pagan' rulers were won for christianity. The political influence of the church remained proportional to its functional indispensability, that is, in the west, enormous. In the eastern empire, the church was important, but it had no monopoly on 'high culture' or administrative skills: there always existed a secular bureaucracy beside the church. By contrast, in the west (or indeed in the orthodox east *outside* the empire, e.g. Russia), if one wanted to run even slightly complex administrative structures, there was only the church to turn to. And power over any territory too large to control personally required such structures. Post-Roman Latin

[125] Duby (1977: i 7, i 63); my trans.

christendom always had more than one supreme secular lord. But the plurality of secular political units must never let us overlook that, though not united, they were *linked*—by the simple fact that they all existed on the single, centralized substratum of the church. In a very important sense, post-Roman christendom was always many units *and* one. It was, therefore, never made up of 'bounded' entities.

The universal church defined society as universal. And the *respublica christiana* was not a romantic fiction but a functional reality. In the average village, the church would be just as imposing physically as the manor house, the residence of the local lord. Of course, both the pope and the king remained invisible and notional. But whereas the local lord was not normally an agent of the king, the priest certainly was an agent of Rome (the English word 'vicar' derives from *vicarius*, which indeed means representative or agent—of the local bishop, in this instance). The church impacted on the everyday lives of people far more than supralocal secular rulers could dream of. This meant that as the church was in important respects homogeneous, so, too, was christian society in general. People might be rooted in small-scale local structures, but those structures did not differ in their essence from one end of Latin christendom to the other.

Concerning secular political structures, the small local lordships were part of a hierarchy of larger units—for example a dukedom, a kingdom, and the empire—in which they constituted the bottom rung. Whereas what the pope decreed affected all christendom no matter where the pope happened to be, secular power was normally exercised locally even by those in charge of the bigger, hierarchically superior units. In general, even a king or emperor was most powerful where he happened to be at a given moment, and when he left, his power over that location in a sense left with him. [*S*]*eul le pouvoir sur place était un pouvoir efficace*, as Marc Bloch puts it categorically, only power on the scene was effective power. Like many other historians, he attributes this to the difficulty of transport and communications, which, in his view, left no other option but to let each local lord take most decisions himself.[126]

Whatever the cause, for now the essential point is that in Latin christendom supralocal secular rule was largely virtual. It could not be relied on to maintain order but was, at best, capable of remedying local abuses. It might do that rarely, or indeed not at all, without risking being called in question. On the other hand, the remedying of abuses was exactly what was expected of supralocal rule—not 'government' in today's sense. One advantage for supralocal power-holders, more particularly those wearing a crown, was that this made them the focus of hope if they did nothing and saviours if they did, enhancing their legitimacy either way or at least not undermining it. Legitimacy was all-important, since in Latin christendom no one had the ability to control a large territory or population effectively by means of coercion.

3.2.2.1 *Law and legislation*

'It should go without saying that the modern notion of "law" [*Gesetz*] . . . is inapplicable to the middle ages,' Otto Brunner has written.[127] By 'law', he means the product of conscious legislation, and by 'middle ages' he means the post-Roman Latin west. In the east, as we saw, legislation did take place; but in the west, since no one had the means to enforce the law uniformly in a large territory, legislation by the central power simply

[126] Bloch (1989: 105, 470).
[127] Brunner (1981: 387, n. 4); my trans.

made no sense. We saw that Charles I tried his hand at legislation, but by the tenth century, rulers generally abstained from such efforts. Had the king been regarded as a lawgiver, the famous phrase from a mid-thirteenth century English legal treatise would not have been possible: according to this 'the law makes the king' (*lex facit regem*), meaning that a king had to be legitimately established. We would expect the opposite, which in Latin would merely require the transposing of two letters: *rex facit legem* 'the king makes the law'. But this evidently did not occur to the person coining the phrase, usually but probably wrongly identified as Henry de Bracton.[128]

'The law' in Latin christendom did not consist of laws—passed, modified, and repealed by some agency with the right and the power to do so when it saw fit, as was the case in the Roman empire at least from the fourth century onwards and as is the case now. Instead, 'the law' was seen as largely fixed for all time and inherited from previous generations. Law, then, was custom, that which corresponded to long-standing practice. To pre-empt controversy, customary law might be written down, but the initiative for this usually came from private individuals—as in the case of Eike of Repgow, compiler of the so-called *Mirror of the Saxons* (*Sachsenspiegel*, written between about 1220 and 1235 and one of the most influential law books in Germany and other parts of central Europe), or of Philippe de Beaumanoir, compiler of the (likewise influential) *Coutumes de Beauvaisis*, the customary law of the Beauvais region, of 1283.

On the other hand, there was Roman law. The rise of non-theological scholarship after the turn of the millennium was given a strong boost by the rediscovery, by the west, of the entirety of the Justinianic *Corpus iuris* (later—after the Refomation—called *Corpus iuris civilis*, to distinguish it from canon law). Although parts of the *Corpus iuris* always remained known in the west, especially in Italy, it was only after the rediscovery of the *Digest*, in the second half of the eleventh century, that it became the object of intense study (manuscripts of the *Digest* go back without exception to a single copy kept at Pisa at the time). In the twelfth century, the *Corpus iuris* quickly found wide distribution. It became the standard text for legal training in law schools and universities. Legal scholars treated the *Corpus iuris* much like theologians treated the bible: as a collection of sacred writings whose truth no one would dare call in question, but which required painstaking commentary and discussion. 'In the Justinianic *Corpus* lawyers had discovered their holy writ.'[129] Given the high esteem for tradition, the fact that the *Corpus iuris* was already ancient of course did not diminish its prestige. On the contrary, it was its very age that showed it to be a manifestation of the eternal divine order of things. It thus exerted an increasing influence on jurisprudence, especially in the field of private law, with which the bulk of the *Corpus iuris* is concerned.

Finally, but of equal importance with custom and Roman law, there was the law of the church, systematically developed in proportion as the increasing interest in the *Corpus iuris* spurred the evolution of jurisprudence. At first, past papal utterances were collected; later such utterances were also deliberately produced for inclusion in the *Corpus iuris canonici*. To a greater extent even than the *ius commune* or 'common law' (as it was often called) of the *Corpus iuris*, church law was universally valid, beyond all borders

[128] Heinricus de Bractona (or Brattona) (attributed), *De legibus et consuetudinibus Angliae*, section *Rex non habet parem*. Quoted Passerin d'Entrèves (1967: 86).

[129] Hattenhauer (1992: 255); my trans.

between secular rulers. Unlike Roman law, it was not in competition with local law, or if it was, church law tended to prevail.

Neither church law nor Roman law was specific to particular political units. In principle, both could be invoked throughout Latin christendom. Nor did customary law respect 'political' borders. It could be equally valid in the dominions of different rulers, but rulers over a large territory would be faced with different legal traditions in different parts of it. It is also important to understand that the applicability of law not universally valid (i.e. other than Roman and church law) was regarded as 'a personal, indeed a portable possession',[130] rather than being defined in territorial terms. A person was not subject to the law of the place where he or she happened to be, but to the law of his or her place of origin or of the corporation to which he or she belonged. 'Every man has his law before the king,' the *Mirror of the Saxons* observes in the early thirteenth century. 'Every man must also answer before the king [or, presumably, his representatives] everywhere in accordance with his own law, and not in accordance with the law of the plaintiff.'[131] Divorced from the authority of some central power, this type of law evidently had little in common with today's notion of law made and enforced by the 'state'.

3.2.2.2 *Legitimate violence*

Max Weber has popularized the notion of the monopoly of legitimate violence as a main characteristic of the 'state'. In Latin christendom, no one possessed such a monopoly, not even any king. He would have needed armed forces capable of controlling his dominions in their entirety—basically, a standing army. But even if such a thing had been envisaged, it would have been materially impossible. Maintaining a standing army presupposed a stable monetary revenue for example from taxes, since no king was rich enough to finance such an army entirely from the royal demesne (property held by the crown), and since it was scarcely possible to hire soldiers without money. But taxation first had to be organized and accepted by those asked to pay. Unlike the situation in the eastern empire, money taxes had practically disappeared in the west in the second half of the first millennium, one reason for this no doubt being the low degree of monetization of the economy. It was only with the rise of new towns after the turn of the millennium that monetization advanced (a phenomenon we shall look at in Chapter 4). But if more money was now available, still the crown had first to establish its right to a share. Like the increase in monetization itself, this was necessarily a gradual process. It was not before the fifteenth century that the French or English crown had a substantial and more or less stable, reliable tax revenue paid in coin.

To be sure, there was the obligation to serve one's lord (such as the king) on campaign. Sometimes (as in Germany) the king could theoretically call on all free men in his kingdom for such service, sometimes (as in France) he could only call on his own men, who then called on their men, and so on. But even in the former case it was administratively impossible to reach everybody who was liable to serve, and logistically impossible to keep a large army together for long. Moreover, the duty to serve was limited, ordinarily to forty

[130] Friedland (1991: 98), my trans.; cf. Pernoud (1977: 58).

[131] *Sachsenspiegel*, Landrecht 3.33. This work is quoted—in my own trans. from Middle High German—after the edn. by Friedrich Ebel (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1993). It consists of three books of *Landrecht* (law of the land), and one of *Lehnrecht*, or law of fiefs.

days or six weeks per year.[132] In France, the first king to dispose of a standing army was Charles VII (reigns 1430–61) towards the end of his reign.[133] At that time this was still unusual: elsewhere in christendom most rulers had no permanent armed forces until well after the Reformation. In such circumstances, the right to resort to violence for legitimate purposes could only be vested in all lords, independently of their rank in the social hierarchy. Moreover, what was or was not legitimate was decided by those lords themselves, although others, whether they were hierarchically superior (such as the king), equal, or indeed inferior could challenge the legitimacy of their measures, and resist them by force if they saw fit. Feuds therefore were an integral component of the legal order of the period, not an abuse.[134]

Strong criticism of this system came from the church, which disapproved of violence unless authorized by itself. A well-known pun of the period, found in various clerical writers like Anselm of Canterbury or Bernard of Clairvaux, declared that the soldiery or warrior class had turned into an evil: *non militia, sed malitia*.[135] The pun also appears in the call for what became the First Crusade by pope Urban II (at Clermont in France in November 1095) as recorded by Baudri of Bourgueil. Baudri (1046–1130), himself a high-ranking cleric, was present at Clermont. Yet regardless of how close his text is to the actual words of the pope, it is typical for the accusations levelled at the warrior class by the church—their hackneyed character evident for example from the presence of the *militia/malitia* pun. 'What are we saying, brothers?', Baudri has the pope exclaim:

> Listen and comprehend. Wearers of the swordbelt [*cingulum militiae*], you strut about with vainglorious arrogance, you slaughter your brothers, indeed you cut up one another. This is not the soldiery of Christ [*militia Christi*], that scatters the sheep-fold of the redeemer [*ovile Redemptoris*]. Holy Church has kept the soldiery for herself so that it might render assistance to her faithful, but you, maliciously, have turned it into an evil [*Sancta Ecclesia ad suorum opitulationem sibi reservavit militiam, sed vos eam male depravastis in malitiam*]. To tell the truth—since we are called upon to be its criers—verily the path on which you walk is not the path that would lead you to life, you oppressors of orphans, you exploiters of widows, you murderers, you temple thieves, you pillagers of property not yours.

Baudri has the pope go on in this vein a little longer before calling on his audience either to put down their weapons, or turn them against the infidels, if they cared for a chance to save their souls.[136]

If there was no monopoly of legitimate violence and if the crown lacked coercive power, was not the necessary result a permanent war of all against all, at least among those who carried arms? That, remarkably, is not what Baudri has the pope imply, for all his rhetorical exaggeration: he seems more concerned with the grave danger that the behaviour of the 'soldiery' posed to their own souls than with any danger to society. Indeed, no such danger existed (for society as such, as opposed to individuals), as has

[132] Mousnier (1982: 24); *Sachsenspiegel* Lehnrecht 4.

[133] Pernoud (1977: 66).

[134] Mitteis (1964: 29).

[135] Bloch (1989: 442) cites Anselm and Bernard by way of example and without indicating relevant passages in their writings. The pun is found e.g. in Bernard, *De laude novae militiae ad milites templi* (Migne PL 182: 921ff.).

[136] Baudri of Bourgueil, *Historia Hierosolymitana*, in *Recueil des historiens des croisades: historiens occidentaux* (Paris 1841–1901), vol. 4, at p. 14; my trans.

been shown by Georges Duby at least for the Mâconnais. This is a region in France to whose evolution in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, when neither the crown nor any other supralocal lords had any power there any longer, Duby has devoted a famous monograph.

> ... after the year one thousand ... the nobility knows no constraints other than moral pressure, and order in the upper classes of lay society is maintained above all by faith [*foi*]. Faithfulness [*fidélité*] to christian doctrine, stimulated by the fear of divine vengeance, faithfulness to family sentiment, which entails a duty to help living relatives and keep them away from misdeeds, and to make up for those of dead relatives, faithfulness finally to multiple obligations, oath of vassalage, oath of peace, oath of guaranty or hostage, which the knight is called on to contract in a great many circumstances. To be sure, all those ties are weak, but they complement one another and catch the nobleman in a web so tight that in fact he is attached to all those surrounding him and that he would have occasion to wrong. The desire to avoid censure by the servants of god, by his family, by his neighbours, by his lords, and by his own men forces him to keep his calm. Violent, agitated, the world of the lords is not anarchical. The sources do not suggest that killings were particularly frequent. As to encroachments, thefts, robberies, of which the clerics complain, they were certainly numerous ...; but one has to admit that such damage was normally repaired.[137]

The detached, sober judgement of Duby, based on a very thorough examination of the local sources, is a necessary corrective to the excited rhetoric of Baudri and other contemporaries, who could not offer a balanced picture in the manner of Duby without appearing to condone practices that with reason they considered reprehensible. This must be borne in mind in the case of all reflections on the phenomenon from the period. Thus, it is still applicable to the long digression on armed rivalry among great lords in the late-fifteenth-century memoirs of Philippe de Commynes, an adviser of king Louis XI of France (reigns 1461–83). Again and again, Philippe expresses the view that the main cause of violent struggle was the ambition of the lords, and to a lesser extent their mutual distrust. They also clearly simply itched for a good fight: ... *à grand'peine pouvoit endurer paix*, 'he found peace very hard to endure', is how he characterizes the king himself.[138]

For Philippe, the urge to resort to violence was inherent in human nature and irremediable.[139] But it was more dangerous among the lords, more particularly the great lords. They invested the money that they extorted from their subjects in wars or feuds (*guerres*) undertaken at will.[140] Their subjects they treated as they liked, whereas in the case of their neighbours it depended on how strong and aggressive those neighbours were.[141] However, since no one else could do so (and here Philippe evidently included the king), god punished the wrongdoings of great lords with special severity.[142] Philippe

[137] Duby (1982: 170–1); my trans. The Mâconnais study has been used in highly irresponsible, misleading fashion by Markus Fischer (1992) to support conclusions that are the exact opposite of what Duby demonstrates, with Fischer arguing that the relations between lords in the Mâconnais did conform to the 'realist' postulate of the 'logic of anarchy' and were unaffected by social norms or 'moral pressure'.

[138] Philippe de Commynes, *Mémoires* 1.10 (1978: 92); cf. ibid. 6.11 (1978: 516).

[139] Philippe de Commynes, *Mémoires* 5.18 (1978: 426).

[140] *à volonté*, Philippe de Commynes, *Mémoires* 5.18 (1978: 428); *à volonte, et sans propos*, ibid. 5.19 (430).

[141] Philippe de Commynes, *Mémoires* 5.18 (1978: 428).

[142] Philippe de Commynes, *Mémoires* 5.19 (1978: 435).

dedicates an entire chapter to recent instances (drawn from throughout christendom) of divine retribution for the arrogance of princes; the chief instrument of such retribution being the enemies, domestic as well as external, whom god caused to oppose them.[143]

Philippe thus laments the situation, but, significantly, sees it as inescapable. It did not occur to him to contemplate an alternative system—and that less than a century before the formulation of the theory of royal sovereignty by Jean Bodin. Philippe shows how, at the end of the pre-Reformation period, an astute observer steeped in the practical politics of his day could still live entirely in the traditional mental universe of Latin christendom—even in France, later regarded as the home of 'absolutism', and in the reign of a 'strong' king, as Louis XI is generally considered by historians. Further, it should be noted that for Philippe violent conflict routinely took place within kingdoms rather than between them; even in the latter case it was not kingdoms that fought, but lords who happened to wear a crown. Likewise, in the conflicts *within* France, Louis XI is depicted by Philippe as in some ways just the most prominent of the warring lords, and not the least rash to resort to arms against rivals (to whom he would often be closely related). Indeed, Philippe presents France as a paradigmatic case of the conditions described by him, which he thought were nowhere as evident as here: 'I say this about our realm, which is more oppressed and persecuted by this situation [of violent quarrel among great lords] than any other lordship that I know.' It is noteworthy that Philippe treats the realm as a lordship rather than a community—although he does say 'our'.[144]

3.3 Discourse of eternity and collective identities in christendom

The French crown by the eleventh century no longer had any coercive power over the Mâconnais, and yet despite the absence of an effective central power society did not lapse into permanent civil war. The crown was not necessary to maintain the social order. On the other hand, no one in the Mâconnais, whether peasant, burgess, priest, or nobleman, would have denied being subject to the crown of France. That is the reason, the sole reason, why there was a kingdom of France: not because of the power of the crown, but in spite of the fact that it had no power. For in other parts of France, the situation at the time was similar. In the words of Joachim Ehlers: 'Around the turn of the millennium, France thus consisted of a relatively well-defined group of princes and principalities that were oriented towards the king, but free of his rule.'[145]

The crown was not everywhere as weak as in France at that time. France around the turn of the millennium represents an ideal type: it shows that in Latin christendom there was no firm link between the ability of the crown to wield power—an ability that it might or might not have—and the stability of its realm. In the period under discussion, collective identities shaped supralocal political structures more than the other way around. In

[143] Philippe de Commynes, *Mémoires* 5.20.

[144] *Je dis cecy pour nostre royaume, qui est plus oppressé et persécuté de ce cas que nulle autre seigneurie que je connoisse.* Philippe de Commynes, *Mémoires* 5.18 (1978: 429); my trans.

[145] Ehlers (2000*a*: 44); my trans. The rulers of the principalities—such as Aquitaine, Burgundy, and Flanders—originally all had the title count. They were powerful, but even they did not necessarily control the entirety of the territory nominally assigned to them. Thus, the Mâconnais nominally belonged to Burgundy.

addition, among the diverse types of particular collective identities within christendom, there was none that was uniquely associated with political community, such as the nation is now. Particular collective identities moreover could overlap and interpenetrate, and often it is not possible to determine which of those identities was the primary 'political' one.

In the pre-christian Mediterranean world, there was no notion of a timeless cosmic order, and political structures were thought of as impermanent rather than timeless (as the state is thought of now). In a world of atomistic social and political entities, the notion of a universal order that incorporated all of them was difficult to conceive. It was only the unification of the Mediterranean world by the Roman empire and christendom that created a universal community in which local identities found their place. Moreover, both the Roman empire and, to an even greater extent, the church were based on a participatory ideology. Almost necessarily they created a discourse of eternity for the civilization as a whole.

Being a universalist construct, the Roman empire was not thought of in spatial terms. Rather than the empire having its position in space, all space by rights belonged to the empire. Hence the description of the rulers as lords of the world, of the human race in its entirety. The church was even more indifferent to space. Whoever entered god's community thereby became part of a historical process, a divinely willed story that ran through time but whose location in space was not really essential: from the creation of the world to the expulsion from paradise, the old alliance (testament), the incarnation, the new alliance, the coming of the antichrist, the end of the world, and the last judgement. The central role of this story as a *process in time* is mirrored in the political thinking of christendom. On a very fundamental level, and unlike today's highly spatial discourse of eternity, this thinking privileges time over space even where the subject under discussion is not at all theological. Thus the problem of political identities, of defining community, was solved by situating people, and things important to them, in time, in the world-historical process, and not by situating them in space. All particular history was seen as part of the universal history, the universal process in time that all christendom shared in.

3.3.1 The empire of Constantinople

In the east Roman empire collective identity was not much of a problem. At least at its core, the empire remained what it had increasingly become since the advent of monocracy under Augustus: not just dominion but also community. People were both christian and Roman, the two being concomitant. In today's historiography, the operators or inhabitants of the empire are usually described as 'Byzantines'. They themselves invariably referred to themselves as Romans (*Rhômaíoi*) and called their country *Rhômanía*. Arabs and Turks, too, referred to the empire as *Rum*, Rome. Its last monarch, Constantine XI Palaiológos, in 1448 inherited a territory that, apart from the city of Constantinople itself, had shrunk to a portion of the Peloponnese and some islands. But a charter issued shortly after his accession was signed by him using the full, traditional title of his once-powerful predecessors: *Kônstantínos en Christô tô theô pistós basileús kai autokrátôr Rhômaíôn ho Palaiológos*, Constantine Palaiológos, in Christ the god faithful king and *autokrátôr* (= Latin *imperator*) of the Romans. Coins from his reign bear the legend *Kônstantínos despótês ho Paleológ*[*os*] *th*[*eo*]*ú cháriti basileús*

Rhoméon, Lord Constantine Palaiológos, by god's grace king of the Romans. *Rhômaíoi* in fact continued to be what the Greek-speaking christian subjects of the Ottoman sultan called themselves, indicating how widespread and deeply rooted their self-perception as 'Romans' was. Thus, even now, in colloquial Greek the noun *Rhômiós* paradoxically designates a Greek, and the adjective *rhômaiíkos* means 'Greek'.[146]

If it had not been based on some form of political community, the eastern empire would not have lasted as long as it did. It finally perished, but that should not make us forget the many times that in the thousand years preceding its extinction it did not perish. One remarkable aspect of its evolution during that long period is that it had no fixed territory, no firm moorings in space. Pushed eastwards as, by comparison with the original Roman empire, it was anyway, it subsequently experienced a kind of territorial roller-coaster ride with Constantinople as its pivot. In the seventh century, the Balkan peninsula including Greece was lost to Slavs and Bulgars. A little later Syría and north Africa fell to the Arabs. The empire held on to Asia Minor: Constantinople was now in the extreme northwest corner of the territory that it controlled (if we disregard the slowly shrinking portion of Italy also ruled from Constantinople). In the tenth century, the reconquest of southeastern Europe including Greece was begun. At the death of Basíleios II (reigns 976–1025), the empire touched the Danube in the north and Belgrade (formerly Singidunum, Graecized as Singidónon or Singidṓn, but tenth-century Greek sources have Belégradon or Belégrada) in the west, to which must be added southern Italy. It is noticeable that Basíleios, under whom much of this re-expansion took place, strictly limited it to areas with a christian majority—concretely, in the east, Armenia and Georgia, and in the west, the empire of the Bulgars, southern Italy, and Sicily (which, however, he failed to recover from the Saracens). By contrast, Basíleios refused to conquer territory that had been islamized, despite excellent opportunities, like the power vacuum in Mesopotamia at that time, or provocations, like the destruction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem by the caliph al-Hakim in 1009. Basíleios renewed his truce with al-Hakim, concluded in 1001, in 1011, and again in 1023.[147]

Its previous re-expansion in southeast Europe ensured the survival of the empire when, after the defeat of Mantzikert (Mantzíkerton in Greek sources; now Malazgirt in eastern Turkey), in the late eleventh century almost all of Asia Minor fell to the Turks, and southern Italy to the Normans. Constantinople was now situated on the eastern fringe of the empire. The same great landowners previously found in Asia Minor now

[146]The designation of the Greek-speaking lands as *Rhômanía* is found in popular literature of 14th/15th-cent. date such as the *Digenḗs Akrítês* or the *Chronikón tou Moréôs*; see the excerpts reproduced in Horrocks (1997: 262, 278). The charter is now in the Academy of Sciences in Athens. See Nicol (1994: plate 10); on the coins ibid. p. 72. The legend on the coins (but not the signature) shows the tendency to spell words as they were actually pronounced—'e' for 'ai', no distinction between short and long o—thus 'correctly' *Kônstantínos*, but *Rhoméon* for *Rhômaíôn*. *rhômaíos* > *rhômiós* because the diphthong 'ai', pronounced [e], weakened to [j] and caused the accent to shift. Cf. Attic *kardía* [kard'ia] 'heart' > demotic *kardiá* [karðj'a]; in the case of *palaiós* 'old', in today's Greek the original spelling is found alongside the spelling *paliós*, which represents the same modification as *Rhômiós*. As this phenomenon (synizesis) is already found in pre-christian Greek (Horrocks 1997: 107, 111), the revised spelling no doubt corresponds to the prevailing pronunciation already in the eastern empire. As a result of the official adoption of this revised spelling the original spelling *rhômaíos* [rom'eos] became available to mean 'Roman' (noun). In the case of the adjective, *rhômaiíkos* [rom'eikos] 'Greek' is now distinguished from *rhômaikós* [romaik'os] 'Roman'.

[147]Whittow (1996: 379–90); Treadgold (1997: 538).

appear for example in Greece.[148] Taking advantage of the First Crusade, the initiative for which originally came from the eastern emperor Aléxios Komnênós, Constantinople regained much of the coastal lands of Asia Minor, whereas the thinly settled interior plateau seems to have been deliberately abandoned for good. Much of the Balkans was successfully defended against the Normans as well as against the Turkish tribes of the Cumans and Patzinacs. In this twelfth-century incarnation of the empire, Constantinople once more occupied a position at the geographical centre. For what such figures are worth, Warren Treadgold estimates the population of the empire at 12 million in 1025, 5 million in 1097, and 8 million in 1143.[149]

There must have been many christian Greek speakers who found themselves temporarily or permanently outside the territory under the secular control of Constantinople but who nevertheless regarded the *basileús* as their rightful, if notional, head. The empire even survived (if barely) the temporary loss of its capital to the western crusaders in 1204—which would have been hardly possible if it had only been based on the might of the central power, important as that was. After the loss of Constantinople to the 'Latins' in 1204, more of the empire (including Attáleia) fell permanently to the Turks. The rest fragmented into rival lordships, of which three succeeded in stabilizing themselves. Their disunity prolonged the life of the crusader regime in Constantinople, militarily weak, encircled by Greek opponents, and hardly popular with its orthodox subjects. In 1261, troops of the Greek ruler of Níkaia (İsnik) seized the weakly defended capital in an attack launched on the spur of the moment, surprising everybody including their ruler, who proceeded to have himself (re-)crowned in the Hagía Sophía. It was presumably not least because of the added legitimacy thus gained that it was at last possible to bring the second of the three rival lordships, based in Épeiros in Greece, back under the control of Constantinople. The third, in distant Trapezús, remained autonomous—if for no other reason than that Constantinople was now too weak to reconquer from the Turks the long stretch of coastal lands along the Black Sea that earlier linked it to Trapezús.

In proportion as the secular power weakened, the church became still more important than it always had been for the collective identity underpinning the empire.[150] Even if the secular empire might languish, the church continued to be universal and potent, and church and empire were inseparable. A letter[151] from patriarch Antony IV of Constantinople to the ruler of Moscow (*mégas rhêx Moschobíou*), written at a time when the emperor was basically a Turkish vassal and reduced to the territory around his capital, expresses the continuing (self-)perception of the east Roman empire as chosen by god, and superior despite all adversity. The letter is worth quoting at length, not least because it offers an interesting comparison with the political thinking of Latin christendom—in the contemporary west, too, we shall encounter the phenomenon of a 'Roman empire' playing a central role in the thinking of the period despite being practically powerless. The last part of the letter, which would have given the date, is missing, but it was probably written in 1393.

Being the universal teacher of all christians [*epeí de katholikós eimi didáskalos pántôn tôn christianôn*], I am obliged, when I hear that something is done by your highness [*hê eugeneía*

[148] Treadgold (1997: 678).
[149] Treadgold (1997: 700).
[150] Nicol (1993: 18).
[151] Miklosich and Müller (1862: no. 447).

sou] that harms your soul, to write to you as your father and teacher to warn and exhort you to put the matter right, and you, as a christian and a son of the church, are obliged to do so.

Why do you despise me, the patriarch, refusing to grant the honour [*timḗ*] that . . . your ancestors did grant? Why do you despise both me and the men I send, and why do they not enjoy the honour and rank [*tópos*] that men of the patriarch always used to enjoy? Do you not know that the patriarch occupies the place of Christ, and that he sits on the very throne of the master [i.e. Christ]? That you despise not a man, but Christ himself, that he who honours the patriarch honours Christ?

That because of the sins committed by us all we have lost our lands and provinces is no reason why we should be despised by christians. Even if we are despised as regards worldly rule, nevertheless the christian faith is preached everywhere, and ours is the same honour that the apostles and their successors also had. For they, too, lacked recognition among men and worldly rule . . . , but the glory [*megaleíon*] and prestige [*krátos*] that they had among christians were beyond all [worldly] honour. Therefore, my son, I write to you and exhort you and counsel your highness to honour the patriarch just as you would Christ, as well as his words and the letters, proclamations, and men that he sends. . . . [The patriarch continues in this vein for several more lines, warning of divine retribution.] This, then, I must impress on you and teach you, and it is your duty as a son of the church to obey and put the matter right.

Concerning my most noble [*krátistos*] and holy [*hágios*] *autokrátôr* and *basileús* [Manuel II Palaiológos, reigns 1391–1425], certain regrettable utterances by your highness have been reported to me. It is said that you prevent the archbishop [*mêtropolítês*, nominally of Kiev but residing in Moscow] from mentioning the divine name of the *basileús* in the *díptycha*, . . . and that you claim that we have a church but no *basileús* . . .

(*díptycha* were twin, folding writing tablets made of wood and covered with wax so they could be reused. In the early church they served to record lists of names to be included in prayers during mass; later the word also came to mean those prayers themselves. Who was or was not included in such intercessions was a political issue already in fifth-century Constantinople.)

The holy *basileús* has great weight [*polýn tópon*] in the church, for he is not like the other rulers and lords of some land [*hoi álloi árchontes kai authéntai tópôn*]. From the beginning, the *basileís* [plural of *basileús*] strengthened and implemented the faith throughout the world [*oikouménê*]. They convened the world ['ecumenical'] councils [*oikoumenikás synódous*], and what the divine and sacred statutes [or decrees, of the councils: *theíoi kai hieroí kanónes*] lay down concerning true doctrine [*perí tôn orthṓn dogmátôn*] and the commonwealth of the christians [*perí tês politeías tôn christianṓn*], the *basileís* implemented and by their laws commanded to be observed . . .

Now if, with god's permission, the heathen [*ta éthnê*] have surrounded the empire [*archḗ*] and the land [*tópos*] of the *basileús*, nevertheless to this day the *basileús* enjoys the same approval on the part of the church, the same rank, the same prayers. He is anointed with the Great Ointment and approved as *basileús* and *autokrátôr* of the Romans, that is to say, of all christians [*basileús kai autokrátôr tôn Rhômaíôn, pántôn dêladḗ tôn christianṓn*]. In every land, by every patriarch and archbishop and bishop, the name of the *basileús* is commemorated wherever people call themselves christians. Surely this is not the case with any other lord [*árchôn*], or prince of some land [*topárcha*]. The renown of the *basileús* is such that even the Latins, who are not in

communion with our church, nevertheless grant him the same honour and the same deference [*hypotagḗ*] as in the old days, when they were united with us. Orthodox christians [*hoi christianoí hoi orthódoxoi*] owe it to him all the more.

That the heathen have surrounded the land of the *basileús* is no reason for christians to despise him. Rather it should be a lesson to them and make them wiser: if the great *basileús* [*ho basileús ho mégas*], the lord and ruler of the world [*ho tês oikouménês kýrios kai árchôn*], he who is invested with such great might [*ho tosaútên peribeblêménos dýnamin*], has met with such distress, what might not some other local prince [*topárcha*] or little ruler [*olígôn árchôn*] suffer? After all, your highness and the land that is yours [*ho autóthi tópos*] suffer often, besieged and plundered by the godless.

(The patriarch is alluding to the Mongols or Tatars, who in the 1220s overran the old Russian empire of Kiev and established themselves in the Volga region; in the fourteenth century, the Lithuanians, also as yet 'pagan', in their turn appropriated much Russian territory. The Moscow rulers paid tribute to the Mongols until 1480, and for some time deferred to the Lithuanians as well.)

Still it would not be right for us to despise your highness on that account. Rather, Our Mediocrity [the patriarch is referring to himself] as well as the holy *basileús* both write to you in accordance with the established usage . . . , and the same honour granted to your predecessors we grant to you [in our communications, different types of which are enumerated].

It is thus not proper, my son, for you to say that we have a church but no *basileús*. It is not possible for christians to have a church but no *basileús*. The office of the *basileús* [*basileía*] and the church are linked in a close union and cannot be separated. . . . My most noble and holy *autokrátôr* is, by god's grace, the most orthodox and faithful champion [*prómachos*], defender [*dephénstôr* (*sic*): a Latinism (*defensor*)], and avenger [*ekdikêtḗs*] of the church, and no one can be an archpriest [*archiereús*] without commemorating him.[152]

Listen what the prince of the apostles [*ho koryphaíos tôn apostólôn*] Peter says in the first of his general epistles: 'fear god, honour the *basileús*' [i.e. the emperor, 1 Peter 2.17]. He did not say 'the *basileís*', lest someone think of the so-called *basileís* found here and there among the heathen, but 'the *basileús*', showing that there is but one universal *basileús* [*hóti heís estin katholikós basileús*]. [The apostle, Antony goes on to explain, commanded this at a time when the *basileús* was an enemy of the christians, because he foresaw that in future they would be united in the same faith—making the *basileús* still more deserving of being honoured.] Now, if other christians adopt the title *basileús*, nevertheless that is contrary to nature and the law and happens rather by usurpation and coercion [*pará phýsin eisín ekeína kai paránoma kai tyrannídi kai bía*$_i$ *mállon ginómena*]. For which fathers of the church [*patéres*], which councils, which statutes [*kanónes*] can they invoke?

But concerning the natural *basileús* they make a great deal of noise [*perí tou physikoú basiléôs ánô kai kátô boṓsin*], whose laws [*nomothesíai*], instructions [*diatáxeis*], and commands [*prostágmata*] are observed in the entire world [*stérgontai katá pásan tên oikouménên*]. Him alone christians commemorate everywhere and none other.

[152] *dephénstôr*: unless it is a misprint, the spelling no doubt reflects a scribal error. Since the ending *-ôr* in Greek only appears in the form *-tôr* some copyist presumably thought that someone else had made a mistake; if so, the word evidently was not familiar to him.

The insinuation by the patriarch that the Moscow ruler, Basil, lacked respect for him is a rhetorical device. If Basil had become obstreporous, it was probably because of irritation with the frequent and often rude interventions from the 'emperor's city', as Constantinople was called in Russian (*Car'grad*). 'Nowhere outside the empire was reverence for the city of Constantinople more deeply or more widely felt than in medieval Russia,' writes Dimitri Obolenski, but adds that this was often a love–hate relationship.[153] The archbishop in question, the Russian metropolitan, was, in an important sense, an agent of Constantinople. Often a Greek native speaker, he was appointed jointly by the archbishop and the *basileús*: when Antony refers to 'men' or representatives that he sends to Russia, he must primarily mean the archbishop himself. He was theoretically archbishop 'of Kiev and all Russia' (*mêtropolítês Kyébou kai pásês Rhôsías*), and is so described by Antony in his letter. In fact, Kiev, the old capital of the Russian empire, had been controlled by the Mongols since 1240, and in 1362 was conquered by the Lithuanians, still 'pagan' at that time. Already in 1326, the archbishop had therefore moved to Moscow, encouraged by the ruler there, whose pan-Russian standing was thus greatly enhanced. But, no doubt also for that reason, not everybody was prepared to recognize the archbishop as pan-Russian. Antony refers to 'the recent confusion and disorder in the church of Russia [*sýnchysis kai tarachḗ pro chrónôn olígôn eis tên ekklêsían tês Rhôsías*]', happily ended by the re-establishment of the current archbishop, the lord Kyprianós—though unfortunately the secession of Great Novgorod (*to Mégan Nobográdion*) was again threatening the unity of the Russian church.

Recalling this presumably served as a reminder to Basil that if he wanted 'his' archbishop to be pan-Russian, and recognized as such by Constantinople, he had better behave. Kyprianós, who was either a Serb or a Bulgar, had held the archbishopric since about 1375, but his first attempt to establish himself in Moscow in 1381–2 had failed. It was only in 1389, when Basil came to power in Moscow and in Constantinople Antony became patriarch, that it was possible to establish Kyprianós durably in Moscow (he died in 1406). Evidently, however, Kyprianós soon quarrelled with Basil; the matter of the intercessions may have been part of a wider conflict. We do not know how it was resolved, yet it is likely that Basil gave in.[154] There is no sign of any estrangement between Moscow and Constantinople in the next few decades. Kyprianós' successors Phótios (in office 1408–31) and Isídôros (before 1437–41) were both natives of the Peloponnese.

The epistle shows a number of parallels with the thinking of Latin christendom and its notion that the Roman empire continued to exist. Like the pope, the patriarch perceives himself as supervising christendom in its entirety and as its 'father'. Within christendom, there are plural secular power-holders of different kinds, or at least they are referred to using a number of different terms (*árchontes, topárchai*, *authéntai*, the *megáloi rhêges* of Moscow), but among them the one in charge of the Roman empire is the most prominent and important—a primacy justified, as in the Latin west, by his close links with the church. Even though they might not be subject to the secular authority of the Roman emperor, other power-holders certainly were subject to the authority of the one church, whose head resided in the capital of the Roman empire, in the west (Rome) as in the east (Constantinople). At least to that extent, all secular power-holders were part of a single christian commonwealth; and thanks to his close links with the patriarch the *basileús kai*

[153] Obolenski (1971: 267).
[154] This is the opinion of both Obolenski (loc.cit.) and Donald Nicol (1993: 299).

autokrátôr (tôn) Rhômaíôn remained a political factor beyond the borders of his own secular territory.

Using terminology that, as we shall see, is likewise current in the west at that time, the patriarch refers to the christian commonwealth expressly, his phrase *politeía tôn christianôn* being the equivalent of the Latin *respublica christiana*. As in the west, the emperor is seen as protector of the (universal) church. He is called the lord and ruler of the world (*ho tês oikouménês kýrios kai árchôn*), corresponding to the Latin *dominus mundi* routinely applied to the western emperor. As frequently happens in the west, too—western examples are cited in Chapter 4—'Roman' is treated as synonymous with 'christian' (*basileús kai autokrátôr tôn Rhômaíôn, pántôn dêladê tôn christianôn*). Finally, the patriarch is not overly bothered by the fact that his Roman emperor, like the western one, in terms of material power was not exactly in a dominant position any longer. Indifference to the issue of material power is characteristic also of contemporary political thinking in the west; the main reason being no doubt that, in the experience of the period, all effective power was local power and supralocal power was always to a large extent notional.

In the end, the growing emphasis on the empire as a bulwark of orthodoxy and the concomitant reliance on the church to shore it up helped undo it. The council of Florence, which both the *basileús* John VIII Palaiológos and the patriarch of Constantinople Joseph II attended, in 1439 decreed the reunification of the Greek church with the church of Rome. What pushed the eastern participants into the arms of Rome was their dependence on western military aid if Constantinople was to defend its autonomy from the Ottoman empire—distracted, around the turn of the fifteenth century, by the central Asian warlord Timur *i leng* (Persian for 'the lame': hence English 'Tamburlaine' or 'Tamerlane'), who nearly crushed it, but now fully recovered. However, the orthodox clergy largely rejected the union of Florence. When the Russian archbishop Isídôros proclaimed it in Moscow in 1441, the *mégas rhêx* had him arrested (Isídôros escaped to Rome, where he gained a cardinalate). The Russian church subsequently declared its autonomy. Meanwhile, led by the monk Gennádios, much of the clergy of Constantinople refused to acknowledge its last 'Roman' ruler, Constantine XI, when he mounted the throne in 1448.

This was because of his adherence to the union; at the same time, infelicitously, the pope delayed promised military aid to put pressure on Constantine to implement the union. In 1450, patriarch Gregory III, whose support for the union made him the object of much hostility, withdrew to Rome without formally abdicating, and in the prevailing climate of dissent was impossible to replace. As a result, Constantine was never crowned. Lúkas Notarás, a high court official and as it were prime minister of the last two Palaiológoi John VIII and Constantine XI, is said to have remarked that he would rather see the Turkish turban in the streets of Constantinople than the mitre of the Latins. The source for this is a contemporary chronicle, so although the attribution of this comment to a prominent figure may be arbitrary it was certainly current at the time.[155] After all, the Turks, while discriminating against christians, did not persecute them or force them to convert (a great many orthodox christians had been living under their rule already for a long time); most importantly, unlike Rome they did not demand theological concessions.

[155] Dúkas chronicle quoted in Nicol (1994: 60).

After his capture of Constantinople in May 1453, the sultan, in January 1454, made a reluctant Gennádios first patriarch of Constantinople under Turkish rule, presenting him with a pectoral cross commissioned by himself. Gennádios, he knew, would not conspire against him with the 'Latins'. The eastern church, like the western church, too, firmly believed that the Roman empire would not perish until just before the end of the world, because that is what both understood the bible to be saying (we shall return to this subject). Gennádios accordingly convinced himself that the end of the world was nigh: its duration limited to seven 'world days' (of a thousand years each, cf. Psalm 90.4, 2 Peter 3.8), it would not outlast the year 7000 (eastern chronology, counting the years from the creation: 1492 CE).[156] Conversely, the fact that 7000/1492 came and went without bringing the end of the world meant that the Roman empire could not have perished after all. Who then was now the protector of the church, the champion of orthodoxy? In the eyes of the Russian church at least, it could only be the ruler of Moscow, John (Ivan) III—who had, in 1480, at last shaken off Mongol suzerainty, and who, moreover, was married to a niece of Constantine XI. From 1494, the Russian church bestowed on John the title *gosudar' i samoderžec vsea Rusi* 'lord and self-ruler of the entire Rus', modelled on *basileús kai autokrátôr* (*samoderžec* is a calque of the latter word), with the addition 'of the entire Rus' perhaps taken from the title of the Russian archbishop (*mêtropolítês pásês Rhôsías*; cf. also the title of the Greek ruler of Trapezús from 1282 to 1460: *basileús kai autokrátôr pásês tês anatolês*, 'of the entire east').

In the sixteenth century, the ruler of Moscow became known as the *car'*. Though derived from *caesar*/*kaísar*, the rank implied by this word was not quite clear, certainly not to the west European public that, in the eighteenth century, *car'* Peter I made a determined effort both to impress and be accepted by. In 1721, Peter therefore formally and unambiguously claimed imperial rank—much to the chagrin of the western (Habsburg) emperor, whose court for a long time refused to recognize the new Russian imperial title; as, likewise, did the French crown. Another attempt at turning the Greek *basileús kai autokrátôr* into Russian, the new title, *imperator i samoderžec vserossiyskiy* (*императоръ и самодержецъ всероссійскій*), paradoxically borrows from the Latin (and even more paradoxically uses a Latin word that in the early first millennium was translated *into* Greek as *autokrátôr* to express the *other* part of this two-part title). It is usually rendered in English as 'emperor and autocrat of all the Russias', although *vserossiyskiy* is in fact an adjective meaning 'all-Russian'.

3.3.2 Latin christendom

3.3.2.1 *Tales of origin*

In western Europe after about 500, no 'Romans' existed any longer (except in the sense of inhabitants of the city of Rome). But expedients were found to remedy that inconvenience: the Franks, with their Merovingian and then Carolingian rulers, became persuaded that like the Romans they had their origin in Troy, and were thus of the same ancient and noble stock. Found already in the so-called Fredegar Chronicle of 642 or shortly afterwards and again in the *Liber historiae Francorum* of 726/7, according to

[156] On Gennádios, see e.g. Podskalsky (1988: 81–3); on his eschatology, see Nicol (1994: 74–5).

this Trojan myth of origin the first Frankish king was Priam of Troy.[157] The rhymed chronicle of the French rulers by the Walloon writer Philippe Mousquet (died *c.*1243) begins with the siege of Troy. The *Grandes chroniques de France*, a semi-official history of the French realm created in 1274 for Louis IX and then continued until 1461, narrate the Trojan origin of the Franks in the first chapter.[158] The *Grandes chroniques* in turn were used by innumerable other authors. 'At the beginning of the sixteenth century a reader who wished to satisfy his curiosity concerning French antiquity could find the Trojan story in all the annals and chronicles. It was everywhere treated as history and no alternative explanations existed.'[159]

The Capetian dynasty still suffered from the reputation of being usurpers many generations after they took over the French (west Frankish) throne from the Carolingian dynasty, which in 987 they did for good (members of the Capetian dynasty had occupied the throne before); they compensated by claiming Priam as their direct ancestor. King Philip I (died 1108) thus had his descent 'from the line of Priam' carved on his tombstone.[160] Around the year 1300, his descendant Philip IV was praised by an anonymous preacher as the forty-eighth successor of Priam, whose blood ran unadulterated in the veins of the French royal house—the purity of the bloodline being an important consideration beyond the mere fact of descent.[161]

However, other rulers claimed Trojan descent as well. In the late twelfth century, Geoffrey of Viterbo, a long-time member of the imperial chancery of the Hohenstaufen emperors Konrad III and Frederic I, drew up a grandiose genealogical panorama demonstrating the existence of a single imperial lineage (*prosapia imperialis*) going all the way back to Noah and, of course, including the rulers of Troy. Geoffrey first presented his work around 1183 in his *Speculum regum* or Mirror of Kings, dedicated to the heir-presumptive Henry. In the preface Geoffrey explains that

> since the noble rank [*ingenuitas*] of the kings and emperors of the Romans and Germans [*Theutonicorum*] proceeds from the single root of the kings of the Trojans [*ab una Troianorum regum stirpe*], which race [*progenies*] of the Trojans derives its origin from the first king of the Athenians, this little book, in order to make the matter clearer, begins in the days of the sons of Noah, after the flood. Thence, supplying the deeds and names of each, it descends, generation by generation, from the fathers to the sons down to the kings of the Athenians, and the bloodline [*cognationis linea*] is traced from the Athenian kings to the Trojan kings, to wit, Anchísês and Priam. Now, with Priam and Anchísês the lineage of the kings divides in two. For from Anchísês descend Aeneas and Ascanius and all the Italian [*Ytalici*] kings and emperors down

[157] *Exinde origo Francorum fuit. Priamo primo regi habuerunt.* Fredegar chronicle 2.4 (MGH SSrM 2).
[158] Beaune (1985: 332–3).
[159] Huppert 1965 (quotation at p. 229), cf. Bodmer (1963); Melville (1987).
[160] Beaune (1985: 333).
[161] *sanguis regum Francie purissimus remanet, cum a Priamo primo eorum rege usque ad istum, reges scilicet XLVIII, nunquam spurius est exortus.* Before 1302, quoted Ehlers (2000*a*: 225). Ehlers (ibid.) notes that tracing the French royal house to Priam had by that time long been a key element of Capetian propaganda. The number 48 may be a mistake, for it seems markedly too low given that e.g. Adam of Bremen (*Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae Pontificum* 3.1) already in the 11th cent. counts Henry III (reigns 1039–56) as the 90th emperor since Augustus and Benedict IX (in office 1033–46) as the 147th pope since the apostles. Although sources sometimes differ in the numbering of the imperial and papal incumbents, the deviation is small. In light of the fact that Troy fell before Rome was founded, to say nothing of the establishment of the empire and the papacy, the number of Frankish rulers since Priam should be higher.

to king Charlemagne [*ad Karolum regem Magnum*], but from the younger Priam, the nephew of Priam the elder by his sister, clearly springs the entire nobility of the Germans [*universa Theutonicorum nobilitas*] down to the very same Charles [*ad eundem Karolum*]. In this Charles the line of both issues comes together [*utriusque propaginis genus concurrit*]. For his mother Berta, being a granddaughter of the emperor Heraclius [Hêrákleios, reigns 610–41], was from the line [*genus*] of the emperors of the Romans and Greeks, whereas his father Pippin, king of the Germans, was descended from the Trojan line. Charlemagne was thus German by his father and Roman by his mother [*patre Theutonicus et matre Romanus*].[162]

In a sense, Geoffrey was outdoing the Capetians, by going back to Noah rather than merely to Priam. On the other hand, of course, all men were descended from Noah, since according to the bible only he and his family survived the flood. And since the *prosapia imperialis* actually includes Priam, any ancestors of that king identified by Geoffrey could likewise be invoked by the French dynasty—a good illustration of the fact that this kind of myth of origin was both competitive and non-exclusive. *Tous nous sommes Troyens*, We are all Trojans, says Philippe Mousquet,[163] and that was not only true of the French. Not only the Capetians or their successors from the house of Valois, or the Hohenstaufen emperors served by Geoffrey of Viterbo, but other rulers as well claimed descent from the Trojans, usually by invoking Merovingian ancestors.[164]

Now largely ignored and unpublished, the material on the Trojan myth not least from the late pre-Reformation period is vast.[165] But the Trojan myth was only one, if particularly widespread and paradigmatic, manifestation of the desire in that period to anchor identity and legitimacy in universal history. Any myth of origin of the period either adapts the Trojan myth to fit its particular clientele (the more common occurrence), or alternatively creates an entirely new story. Even in that case, however, it shares a family resemblance with the Trojan story, conforming to the same basic pattern. Thus, whether a variant of the Trojan myth or not, each such myth tells of migration, of an origin in some faraway land, and usually emphasizes the military prowess of the people concerned. Conversely, there is no notion that the land a people currently inhabited was its native soil and precious as such. Nor does any such myth postulate a specific cultural identity for the people concerned, or vaunt its uniqueness. A good example of a non-Trojan myth of origin is found in the so-called declaration of Arbroath of 6 April 1320. This is a letter by Scottish magnates to pope John XXII denouncing the attempt by the English crown to subjugate the Scottish realm. Some forty high-ranking Scotsmen are enumerated as the official senders of the letter, followed by the phrase *ac tota communitas regni Scocie* 'and the whole community of the kingdom of Scotland'. On the back of the document, where the pope is marked as its addressee, some more supporters of the letter were added, as

[162] Geoffrey of Viterbo in MGH SS 22; the preface of the *Speculum* at pp. 21–2 (the first sentence contains the expression *prosapia imperialis*). Geoffrey followed up the *Speculum* with further writings setting forth the same subject matter at greater length, and printed in the same volume.

[163] Quoted Beaune (1985: 333).

[164] Melville (1987: 427).

[165] Cf. Melville (1987). An impressive sample of this material, including reproductions of illuminated manuscripts, woodcuts, tapestries, and maps of the world, is documented in the contributions by Borgolte, Brunner, Franke, Kugler, and Lienert in the catalogue of the exhibition *Troia: Traum und Wirklichkeit* (Troy: dream and reality) shown in 2001 in Bonn, Braunschweig, and Stuttgart.

well as the remark that the senders acted *per communitatem Scocie* 'for the community of Scotland'.[166]

The document is chiefly famous for two sentences, inevitably quoted when it is mentioned. The pope should not believe, the text warns, that the Scots would ever cease to insist on a king of their own. Robert Bruce owed his kingship to 'the will of god, legitimate succession in accordance with our laws and customs that we shall uphold to the death, and the due agreement and consent of us all [*diuina disposicio et iuxta leges et Consuetudines nostras, quas vsque ad mortem sustinere volumus, Juris successio et debitus nostrorum omnium Consensus et Assensus*]'. The implication that the *communitas regni*, the 'community of the kingdom', makes the king and not the other way around is worth noting (but typical of the period)—even though, as we shall see, it was the kingship as such (as opposed to individual incumbents), that created the 'community of the kingdom' in the first place. In the event that Robert abandoned the fight against the English, the senders of the letter proclaim, they would expel him and appoint another king to defend them (*ad defensionem nostram*). The famous sentences come next: 'For as long as a hundred of us are still alive, we will not be subjected to the rule [*dominium*] of the English in any way. For we do not fight for glory, riches, or dignities, but only for freedom, which no honourable man surrenders except along with his life.'

A community can hardly set itself apart more emphatically than by declaring the protection of its collective identity to be as important as the lives of its members. But how is this identity of the Scots defined? What is it anchored to? The land, the native soil? A unique culture? Not at all. Once more we hear instead of migration, of spatial change rather than spatial continuity, of military prowess, and above all of ancientness, continuity in time.

We know, most holy father and lord, and gather from the accounts and books of the ancients [*ex antiquorum gestis et libris*], that amidst other excellent nations [*naciones*] our own, that of the Scots, has been distinguished by much praise. From Greater Scythia [north of the Black Sea?] it passed through the Tyrrhenian Sea and the Pillars of Hercules [the Gibraltar Strait]. For a long time residing in Hispania [the Iberian peninsula] among nations [*gentes*] of the greatest ferocity, it could not be overcome anywhere by even the most barbaric nations [*gentes*]. From there, a thousand and two hundred years after the people [*populus*] of Israel crossed the Red Sea, it acquired for itself its present seats in the west, winning many victories and suffering untold hardships—first expelling the Britons and entirely destroying the Picts, and despite frequent attacks by the Norwegians, Danes, and English. As the tales of the ancients [*priscorum historie*] attest, it has always held those seats free of any servitude. In its kingdom a hundred and thirteen kings have reigned, all from its own royal lineage [*regalis prosapia*] and without any foreigner being among them.

[166] National Archives of Scotland (NAS), State Papers SP 13/7. This copy is clearly an original; no one has yet been able to explain what it is doing in Scotland rather than in the papal archives, where no copy is extant. However, the pope, in a letter to the English king written in the same year 1320, used phrasing from the Arbroath declaration and thus must have received it (Cowen 2003: 88). The Latin text is reproduced on countless Internet pages in an identical version that to judge by its orthographic particularities (ij for ii, u for v and vice versa, erratic capitalization) is based on an early printing. Edward Cowen (2003: 91) still regrets the lack of a critical edn. taking account both of the NAS copy and the subsequent pre-Reformation manuscript tradition of the text. The trans. provided here is my own.

Of the 'accounts and books of the ancients' mentioned in the declaration at least one text can be identified: this Scottish myth of origin is also found in Nennius' *Historia Brittonum*, compiled around 800. Nennius has the Scots land in Ireland, but indeed the *Scot(t)i* of his time were culturally Irish and their kingdom of Dál Riata straddled the Irish Sea, encompassing both Antrim and Argyll; from it, the later Scottish kingdom developed. Whoever drew up the declaration—it may have been abbot Bernard of Arbroath, chancellor of Scotland, or someone from his entourage—omitted this detail, perhaps to keep the 'Irish question' as it existed then out of view in this context (in the preceding years, Robert Bruce had invaded Ireland and attempted, unsuccessfully, to install his brother as king there). But the close parallels between the declaration and Nennius make it likely that the latter directly inspired the former.[167]

The Scots could not invoke the Trojan story because the English did so already. The Trojan story was used for example by the English king (and conqueror of Scotland), Edward I, to explain to the pope why, as he saw it, the Scots were vassals of the English crown—not by virtue of his conquest, but from time immemorial, or more precisely, the time of the first descendants of Brutus, the grandson of Aeneas, from whom the island of Britain took its name. A son of Brutus called Albanactus had ruled 'Albany', that is, Scotland (*Alba* in Scots Gaelic; Albany was a Scottish duchy).[168] The English, after all, read Nennius and other 'ancients', too, and Nennius features the story about the Britons being the descendants of Brutus[169] alongside the story about the origin of the Scots. For Nennius, around the turn of the ninth century, the necessity of a Scottish myth of origin different from that of the Britons imposed itself because the two peoples spoke mutually unintelligible languages—the Scots the language now called Irish and the Britons the language now called Welsh. Hence, if the Britons, among whom Nennius counted himself, came from Troy, the Scots had to come from somewhere else. Much later, following the Saxon and Norman conquests, the English appropriated the myth of origin of the original Celtic Britons. Even in the seventeenth century, the prominent lawyer Sir Edward Coke still invoked laws purportedly brought from Troy by the original Britons against the 'absolutist' ambitions of the Stuart monarchy.[170]

The Scots, in the declaration of Arbroath, insist on the ancientness not only of their people as such, but of their christian faith, reminding the pope that their patron saint was Andrew, brother of Peter (the first pope) and the very first apostle to be recruited by Jesus. The declaration actually claims that the Scots were the first to be converted to christianity, by the apostle *personally* and at the behest of the lord Jesus himself, who specifically wanted Andrew to be their protector. Andrew is said to have missionized in Scythia, and conceivably it was for that reason that Scythia was identified as the area of origin of the Scots. The specific wording of the passage in question, however, according to which at the time of their conversion by the apostle the Scots resided 'at the very edge of the earth', sounds as if they had already reached their 'present seats', since elsewhere in the declaration it is said of Scotland that 'beyond it there is no habitable land at all'. Relics of the saint were kept in Scotland in the town named after him, the ecclesiastical capital of the country; did whoever drafted the declaration imagine, or mean to imply,

[167] Nennius, *Historia Brittonum* 13, 15. Nennius (1980) is preferable to the edn. in MGH AA 13.
[168] Cowen (2003: 41–5); Barrell (2000: 110–11); Nicholson (1974: 60–2).
[169] Nennius 7.
[170] Bowle (2000: 299).

that Andrew arrived there not as a corpse (or part of one) but when he was still alive? Alternatively, perhaps he saw 'Greater Scythia' as being at the edge of the earth, too, in which case the Scots would have gone from one land on the world's rim to another also on the world's rim, more or less via the centre (thought to be occupied by the city of Jerusalem: though this is not mentioned in the 1320 text, Nennius and other sources also associate the Scots with Greece and Egypt).[171]

Another myth of origin that (on the face of it) ignores the Trojan story is that of the Bohemians in the chronicle of Cosmas of Prague, written in the early 1120s. Cosmas invokes the flood and, following it, the dispersal of mankind, split into groups divided by their language after the destruction of the tower of Babel. One errant band eventually reaches Bohemia, which, Cosmas notes, was then empty. He has the leader, called Boemus, extol the land, urge his followers to stay there, and ask them to devise a name for it. They think it fitting to name it after him: *Boemia*.

Cosmas describes Bohemia as being geographically part of *Germania*, but proper names in his text are given in (or Latinized from) their Czech version, not the German—for example, the main rivers of the country are called *Labe* and *Wlitaua* (*Vltava* in present-day Czech spelling), not *Elbe* and *Moldau*. Clearly, for Cosmas 'Germany' as a spatial entity was not associated with a specific language and ethnicity. Indeed, he was none too well disposed towards those speaking the German language—whom however, as we shall see later on, no one at that time called by a word based on the stem *German-*. Cosmas only employs non-Czech names where no Czech version existed, as with the reigning emperor, Henry, and the current bishop of Prague, Hermann (a 'German' from Utrecht)—and, curiously, in the case of Boemus himself. For that name actually explains the Latin, not the Slavic name of the country, *Bo(h)emia*, itself ultimately based on a pre-Slavic Germanic designation. The syllable *hem* corresponds to English 'home', the country having once been the 'home' of a people whose name was Latinized as *Boii*—an etymology known to Tacitus in the early second century CE.[172]

The reason why Cosmas chose to found his myth of origin on what is effectively a Latin etymology (rather than a Slavic one) was no doubt first of all the prestige of the Latin language, common to christendom as a whole. It may also have played a role that he wrote against the background of a recent struggle over whether the church in Bohemia should follow the Latin rite or the Slavic rite (which by the end of the eleventh century had been rejected for good). The early fourteenth-century so-called Dalimil chronicle, a Czech text influenced by Cosmas, renames Boemus Čech—in doing which it was probably not original, though this seems to be the first recorded instance. 'Dalimil' also specifies that Boemus/Čech and his followers arrived from Croatia, thus underlining their 'foreign' origin.[173]

In the east Frankish (German) realm, the Saxons, demographically and territorially the biggest of the four major German peoples, for a long time cultivated a strong collective

[171] *Rex Regum et dominancium dominus Jhesus Christus . . . ipsos in vltimis terre finibus constitutos quasi primos ad suam fidem sanctissimam conuocauit. Nec eos per quemlibet in dicta fide confirmari voluit set per suum primum apostolum vocacione, . . . sanctum Andream mitissimum beati Petri Germanum, quem semper ipsis preesse voluit vt Patronum.*

[172] Tacitus, *Germania* 28 (*Boihaemus*). A still earlier mention of the name is Velleius Paterculus 2.109 (*Boiohaemus*).

[173] *Cosmae Pragensis Chronica Boemorum* 1.1–3 (MGH SS 2, pp. 4–8); cf. LdM 'Cosmas', 'Čech (Bohemus)', 'Dalimil', 'Sázava'.

identity marked by animosity towards the Franks. (Since the nineteenth century, it has become normal German usage to designate Franks, Saxons, Bavarians, and Swabians as the German *Stämme*, literally 'tribes'—the Thuringians are now usually added to the list, but their weight around the turn of the millennium was negligible compared to the other four, and they are not treated as equal by period writers. In period discourse those communities are always described as *gentes* 'peoples, nations' in Latin; the eleventh-century Middle High German *Annolied* has either *liud* or *geslehte*. The former is the equivalent of the Latin word, the latter is perhaps best rendered as 'race'. Following period usage, in this text I designate those ethnic groups as *gentes* or 'peoples'.) After all, the Saxons had become part of the Frankish empire because the Franks under Charles I (Charlemagne) had conquered them and forced them to convert to christianity. Although, by the tenth or eleventh century, the Saxons, or at least their elite, had fully accepted membership of the empire and espoused the new faith without reservations, anti-Frankish sentiment remained—as displayed for example by Widukind of Corvey (*Res gestae Saxonicae*, written in the 960s), or Bruno of Magdeburg (*Saxonicum bellum*, 1082). This resentment was fertile soil for a myth of origin according to which the Saxons descended from the soldiers of Alexander of Macedon—as formidable a hero as any Trojan; moreover, it was the Greeks (among whom period sources routinely number Alexander as well) who conquered Troy and caused the inhabitants, ancestors of the Franks, to flee. This Alexander story appears for example in Widukind (1.2), in the eleventh-century *Annolied* (stanza 21), in Geoffrey of Viterbo (*Pantheon* 18.6, 1190), or in the *Mirror of the Saxons* (Landrecht 3.44, 1220s).

The Saxons emphasized their non-Trojan origin for the same reason as the Scots, which was that Trojan origin was already asserted by their rivals or adversaries. The myth of origin of the Bavarians was probably the result of a similar consideration. The *Annolied* explains that the Bavarians came from near Mount Ararat in Armenia—where, this text claims, people still spoke German. An eleventh-century audience no doubt understood this information as implying that the Bavarians had their origin in space far away and their origin in time close to the flood; that they were closely related to Noah (who left the ark on Mount Ararat, as the text reminds its listeners or readers); and that they brought the German language, which thus also had to be very ancient, with them: of course, since German was probably not spoken either in Troy or in the army of Alexander, and yet was shared by all four major German peoples, none of which was thought native to Germany, someone had to have brought the language from somewhere. The *Annolied*, composed around 1080, is the oldest extant text to record this myth of origin of the Bavarians, which later became widely known. Although the author of the *Annolied* was probably Frankish and did not invent this particular story, it is plausible to assume that it is younger than those told about the origin of the Franks and Saxons. The myth of the Trojan origin of the Franks reflects the ascendancy of the Franks in the immediate post-Roman era, the third quarter of the first millennium, and was designed to put them on a footing of equality with their Roman 'relatives' (as according to the Trojan story they were). By the early tenth century, the Saxons had taken over power in the east Frankish empire from the Franks: accordingly they fashioned for themselves a myth of origin to match, or even outshine, that of the Franks (since it told of victory rather than of defeat as in the story of Troy), and first recorded in the second half of the tenth century (Widukind). This, it would appear, inspired someone to come up with a story about the

origin of the Bavarians designed to put *them* on a par with the Franks and Saxons, and first recorded in the late eleventh century.[174]

Trojan origin or some equivalent myth was invoked by rulers, peoples, and, increasingly frequently, cities. Thus, the *Gesta Treverorum*, a text whose earliest known redaction dates from the late eleventh century, trace the origin of the city of Trier to one Trebeta(s) (the spelling in the manuscripts varies), the son of Nínos, an Assyrian who was generally held in the pre-christian and early christian Graeco-Roman world to have been the first to conquer a great empire. As the *Gesta* would have it, when Nínos died, Trebetas found himself harrassed by his stepmother Semíramis, who wished to marry him. To avoid this, Trebetas fled to Europe, where he founded a city named after himself (*Treveri* or *Treberi* in Latin, actually the name of a Celtic people resident in the area when it came under Roman rule). This, we are told, occurred when Abraham was 7 years old, or 1,250 years before Romulus founded Rome.[175] Augsburg presents a similar case. In 1465, the Benedictine monk Sigmund Meisterlin published a Latin history of the city, soon followed by a German version, and which represents the high point of an accretion of tales since the eleventh century. According to this tradition, Augsburg was at least 600 years older than Rome. The Swabians, among whom the inhabitants of Augsburg included themselves, were not considered to be of Trojan origin, but after the Franks, having left Troy, settled in the Rhineland, some of their nobles migrated to Augsburg.

The author of the *Annolied* was able to attribute some faraway origin to the Franks, Saxons, and Bavarians. This left the fourth of the main German peoples, the Swabians. Since it would have been invidious to deprive them of the distant origin that for self-respecting peoples was clearly *de rigueur*, but no appropriate story could be found, the *Annolied* vaguely and rather lamely credits them with having come from 'overseas'. Indeed, I am not aware of any story of distant origin having developed in the case of the Swabians. But Sigmund Meisterlin at least emphasizes their military prowess (another standard element of tales of origin of the period) very strongly, claiming that they learned to use the battle axe from the Amazons when the latter invaded their land. He also thought that Augsburg was the site of the great defeat that the Germans inflicted on the troops of the emperor Augustus in 9 CE and that this was actually a victory won by the Swabians. Nevertheless, the city according to Sigmund was much honoured by Augustus—after all it was named after him.[176] Many Italian cities, but also quite a few French cities, took their mythical founder hero from the legend of Troy (among those French cities, of course, was Troyes).[177]

Against the background of a discourse of eternity that because of its conditioning by christian theology attributed much greater importance to time than to space, no one thought it strange that the Capetians as successors of Priam no longer reigned in the Troad, but more than 2,000 km (1,250 miles) distant in the Île-de-France. If anything this was a source of pride; certainly it created a fashion—with the Saxons (according to the *Annolied*) reaching 'faraway India' before arriving in Germany, the Bavarians hailing originally from Mount Ararat (or near there, anyway), and the Scots, on their

[174] *Annolied* 19–23 (I have used the edn. by Eberhard Nellmann, *Annolied* 1986).

[175] *Gesta Treverorum* 1–2 (MGH SS 8); this is echoed in the 15th cent. by Nicholas of Kues, *De concordantia catholica* §280 (Nicholas 1959).

[176] Schnith (1988).

[177] Beaune (1985: 352).

westward trek from Scythia, picking up their name as well as some royal blood when they passed through Egypt (since their leader, or according to Nennius and other accounts their single oldest ancestor, there married one 'Scota', the daughter of Pharao). But the distant origin of the Franks was of course itself modelled on the wanderings of the Roman people of the *Aeneid*, and a further model, at least as prestigious, was provided by the people of Israel (whose crossing of the Red Sea the declaration of Arbroath alludes to—and which was followed by forty years of erring through the desert and the *conquest* of the land Canaan). Cosmas' Boemus is modelled on Moses and Aaron in that he leads his people to a 'promised' land—the text has him say to his followers that 'this is the land I remember having promised you often [*terra quam sepe me vobis promisisse memini*].' But Boemus is also modelled on Aeneas, who, guiding his people on their way to Italy, in the *Aeneid* (1.93) 'lifts both his palms to the stars': Cosmas has Boemus do exactly that when his followers decide to name their new *patria* after him ('he began to kiss the soil, so overjoyed was he that they called it after himself, and rising up again and raising both his palms to the stars he began to speak thus: "I greet you, o soil [or: land] of destiny [*terra fatalis*], ours by a thousand prayers" ' etc.).

Accordingly, from the viewpoint of the period it did not greatly matter, either, that the (western) 'emperors of the Romans'—as from the tenth century they called themselves without any qualifying addition—reigned in a rather different part of the world than their first predecessor Augustus. Not only did their realm not much overlap with his, but in fact most of the time did not even include Rome itself. From today's perspective, this spatial discontinuity is enough to make it difficult for us to envisage them (or the emperors of Constantinople) as the direct successors of Augustus. On the basis of a different discourse of eternity, however, for the people of Latin christendom that notion had nothing unnatural. For them, the unbroken continuity of the Roman empire not only posed no conceptual problem; rather, it was the opposite idea, that the Roman empire might have ended, that to them seemed impossible. The various explanations by which they made history fit their particular paradigm of continuity were not, as it might appear to us, the reason why such continuity was perceived, but rather were rationalizations of a preconceived notion of inevitable continuity; we shall discuss those explanations later on.

Ancientness conferred prestige and rank—to the point where it could be invoked to fend off claims to suzerainty. The insistence by Cosmas and 'Dalimil' that the followers of Boemus/Čech were the first to arrive in Bohemia (and that it was empty at that time) is consistent with their anti-German and anti-Polish slant. The declaration of Arbroath invokes the ancientness of the Scots, and their early conversion to christianity at the behest of Jesus himself, to fend off English claims. In the fifteenth century, there was a great proliferation of tales crediting figures from the legend of Troy with the founding of Italian cities in order to 'demonstrate that the German emperors . . . could not base their claim to rule over the cities and regions of Italy on the argument that their lineage was more ancient and of higher rank'.[178] When, in 1312, Henry VII of Germany announced to the French king his imperial coronation in Rome, the king, Philip IV, combined his congratulations with the observation that, as was common knowledge, the kingdom of the Franks (French) from the time of Christ onwards had never had any other lord than its king and Christ—and thus none of the Roman emperors, who (Christ having been

[178] Kugler (2001: 236); my trans.

born in the reign of Augustus, the first of those emperors) also reigned since then.[179] The assertion that the French realm was not subject to the empire was thus combined with a reminder that this realm was already there when the (monocratic) empire was created by Augustus. Strange as even that contention may appear nowadays, Philip was actually understating his case, since French kingship was of course routinely traced back much further than that, to Priam of Troy. For good measure, the French reply—like the declaration of Arbroath—posits special attention on the part of the saviour, asserting that the exemption of the French realm from the jurisdiction of the empire was a privilege (*prerogativa*) bestowed by Christ himself.

Even were one to assume that Philip or his chancery had simply made this up, it would still illustrate what they thought their intended audience would swallow or at least not laugh out of court. Claims of ancientness by autonomous actors to enhance their standing were common. In 1434, at the council of Basel, the Swedish bishop Nils Ragvaldsson demanded precedence for his king over all other rulers on the grounds that his realm was the oldest of all. After all, Nils pointed out, Goths had expanded from Sweden to Troy (indeed they did get there, if only in the early christian era), and a Gothic king had married into the family of Priam.[180] The duke of Burgundy at Basel likewise claimed special consideration because of his Trojan descent.[181] The kind of competition going on here would not be easily possible in today's international system, based on the notion that states are equal: 'like units', they are also formally equal in terms of rank. Autonomous actors in Latin christendom were no 'like units', nor were they considered equal: a great variety of rulers, cities, and corporations possessed considerable autonomy even as none denied being part of the greater whole of christendom, and, kings themselves excepted, subject to kings set over part of christendom. The perception and acceptance of an overarching christian community was no more egalitarian than, in that period, was society at any other level within christendom. Actors considered themselves as part of a *hierarchy*, and jockeyed for position within it. Their competition thus presupposed a common discourse recognized even by potential rivals.

A degree of commonality already arose simply from the dominance of the Latin language, which besides being a vehicular language widely used for practical reasons was a sacred language. Any schoolboy learned Latin with the help of Vergil's *Aeneid* and its story of the origin of the Romans in Troy. Composed in the sacred language of the church, and approved by the church for teaching purposes, this narrative had a high prestige. Therefore, it was here, and not in some tradition of their own, that the origin of the Franks was sought, and later also the origin of the Capetians and other dynasts as rightful rulers of the Franks or of peoples related to the Franks. Similarly, the origin of the Saxons was not traced to a hero of their own, but, in the person of Alexander, to another Graeco-Roman hero, who would have been long forgotten were it not for the church, more precisely the libraries of its monasteries. Here, it was mainly a work now known as the *Alexander Romance* that was influential. Attributed to the Macedonian court historian Kallisthénês, it was actually written in the early christian period; the Greek original was repeatedly translated into Latin and adapted. Likewise,

[179] *Notorie namque et generaliter predicatur ab omnibus et ubique, quod a tempore Christi citra regnum Francorum solum regem suum sub ipso Ihesu Christo . . . habuit, nullum temporalem superiorem cognoscens aut habens, quocumque imperatore regnante*. MGH Const. 4.2 no. 811.

[180] Borgolte (2001: 199–200).

[181] Melville (1987: 427).

Nennius, who in his *History of the Britons* recorded their myth of origin as well as that of the Scots, was, of course, a monk writing in Latin. The famous phrase in the declaration of Arbroath claiming that the Scots fought 'only for freedom, which no honourable man surrenders except along with his life' is lifted verbatim from a first-century BCE Roman text, Sallust's *Catilina* (section 33). Nor were the drafters of the declaration unique in borrowing it: Bruno of Magdeburg, in the eleventh century, puts the same phrase in the mouth of one of the Saxon leaders, Otto of Northeim, in a speech justifying the Saxon rebellion against Henry IV of Germany.[182] Cosmas of Prague literally stuffs his account of the early history of Bohemia with quotes from, or implicit references to, the Roman classics—Horace, Lucanus, Ovid, Vergil. Tales intended to cement the collective identity of particular groups were thus anchored in the universal culture transported by the church, and the call for recognition implied in them was addressed to christendom as a whole.

Such tales were, of course, themselves recorded in Latin. The special status of that language presumably explains why Cosmas attributes to 'Boemus' a gesture that his readers, brought up on Vergil, would have recognized immediately as taken from the *Aeneid*: not plagiarism but an overt allusion, perhaps an attempt at putting the story of origin told by Cosmas on a par, or something approaching that, with the story told by Vergil. Descent was traced not just with the help of sources written in Latin, but even, quite frequently, from Latin etymology or what passed as such—as in the case of Brutus supposedly giving his name to the Britons, or 'Scota' hers to the Scots; or when Cosmas bases his Bohemian founding myth on the *Latin*, not the native, name of the country. Another striking example is provided by one Jordanus, a canon of Osnabrück cathedral, in his widely read apology of the Roman empire and its transfer to the *Germani*, 'Germans', written in the third quarter of the thirteenth century. Jordanus applies the term *Germani* only to the inhabitants (*populi*) of the archdioceses of Cologne, Mainz, and Trier. In his view, they were so-called 'because they have sprung from the same seed [literally "germ", *germen*] as the Romans, to wit, the Trojans, that is, Aeneas and Priam the younger; and they are known as Germans for having sprung as it were from the seed of the Romans [*dicuntur Germani quasi de Romanorum germine germinati*, or "germinated from the germ of the Romans"].'[183]

Jordanus has the *Germani* descend from Romans settled in the Rhineland by Julius Caesar. The Rhineland was Frankish territory: by contrast, the Saxons, for Jordanus, were no *Germani*. Jordanus' etymology is based on the fact that in Latin there is a word *germanus*, meaning 'brother' (noun) or 'relating to a brother' (adjective); this has produced for example *hermano* 'brother' in Spanish or 'germane' in English. This word just happened to be a homonym of *Germanus* 'German', which etymologically is really a Latinized Germanic word. The kind of etymology proposed by Jordanus could be plausible only because of the special status of Latin. To be sure, Latin was not the only language in which a story of origin could be expressed—such tales often 'crossed over' into the vernacular (e.g. already mentioned, Philippe Mousquet, the *Annolied*, 'Dalimil'). But they never come from there: they are never the kind of 'folk tales' in which eighteenth- or nineteenth-century nationalist antiquarians hoped to discover the soul, the unique essence of their respective peoples. Instead, they

[182] Bruno, *Saxonicum bellum* 25; Bruno again alludes to the phrase in ibid. 54.
[183] Jordanus of Osnabrück, *Tractatus super Romano imperio* 11–12 (MGH DM 4).

are invariably anchored in the common cultural legacy administered by the universal church.

It may appear bizarre that tales like those discussed were accepted at face value by practically everybody in Latin christendom—not once, during extensive research, have I come across any written sources *doubting* such tales. But it is easy to overlook the beam in one's own eye. The same phenomenon of tales explaining aspects of social organization and utterly taken for granted despite being fictitious is likewise found in today's world, in society at large, but equally in the social sciences. The tales of Latin christendom strike us as incredible because both their contents and the worldview underlying them are unfamiliar. But we believe in didactic tales equally implausible merely because everybody else around us does, too. For example, the notion of 'Greek city states', or of 'Greek democracy', represents the same kind of mythical 'this is where we come from' as the notion that the Franks fought at Troy or the Saxons under Alexander of Macedon. 'We' ('the west') believe that 'Athens' is where 'we' come from, that 'Athens' was an early example of today's states, that 'our' 'democracy', or at least its prototype, was 'invented' there. This study, of course, argues that pre-industrial western civilization had no states, and that fifth-century BCE *dêmokratía* had nothing in common with 'western democracy' as it is now understood.

In the social sciences, the discipline of IR has long clung to the notion that the 'Westphalian state', and with it the 'Westphalian system' of which it is the key module, appeared with the Westphalian peace of 1648—and, though some have voiced caveats, by and large that notion still rules supreme at this writing. It is widely held that at the end of the Thirty Years War, the powers of Europe made a treaty with each other expressly laying down that their mutual relations would henceforth be based on principles like sovereignty, territoriality, or non-intervention (the principles underlying the state of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries). Apart from the fact that some political actors did make peace in 1648, the 'Westphalian myth', as I have called it elsewhere, is precisely that: there was no pan-European peace, no principles were enshrined in any treaty, and the peacemakers were far from trying to put the mutual relations of the autonomous political actors in Europe on a new foundation. But the myth is extremely hard to dislodge because it is so intricately bound up with today's discourse of eternity.[184]

As will have become clear, the discourse of eternity of Latin christendom privileged the universal over the particular to a greater extent than does its present-day successor. In Latin christendom, the universal ('international') community that now takes a back seat to the individual 'state' or 'nation' is of at least equal importance to the particular communities, even if the latter have great political significance, too. Like the myths of present-day nationalism, the myths of Latin christendom exalt particular communities, but in doing so they separate them from the universal community less than is the case now. Only the universal community, christendom, was characterized by a clear distinction between inside and outside, between members and non-members: one was a christian or one was not (to be sure, there was estrangement between the Church of Rome and the Church of Constantinople, but, despite everything, not to the point of denying that the other was christian). Even here, it is worth noting that it was not difficult to become a christian—much less so than it usually is to acquire the citizenship of a 'nation' state.

[184] Cf. Osiander (1994: ch. 2); Osiander (2001*a*).

Within christendom no division between particular communities could be total. Politically, no one could be a foreigner within christendom. Outsiders to one's own particular in-group might be disliked, even hated, but could never be considered totally alien. Whoever they were, they remained 'brothers' (or 'sisters')—the traditional christian form of address, chosen for example by the pope at Clermont in 1095 in the version of his speech recorded by Baudri of Bourgueil, even as he has the pope vehemently condemn his audience as a bunch of robbers and murderers.

Today's national rivalry is also undergirded by a common discourse, to the extent that certain concepts, chief among them that of the nation itself, are universally recognized as legitimate and as being of overriding political significance. But, unlike particular communities in Latin christendom, today's nations claim to be unique, including, indeed in particular, in cultural terms. The discourse of nationalism culturally places nations alongside each other, as it places states alongside each other in spatial terms. By contrast, the particular communities of Latin christendom and their myths did not vie for equality in uniqueness, but for rank on the basis of a common, universal culture, a culture administered by a common organization, the catholic (Greek for 'universal, all-encompassing') church.

Of course, what the church stood for was equally binding on everybody in Latin christendom—Franks and Saxons, kings and bishops, the Hohenstaufen and Capet families. This was not just true of christian teaching, but equally of all other cultural values transported by the church (the guardian, in Latin christendom, of all that remained of pre-christian Mediterranean civilization, starting with the Latin language itself). Among individual actors in christendom as well as among particular communities, competition, indeed antagonism was certainly nothing unusual. But common membership in the church made it impossible totally to separate oneself even from one's arch-enemies. Whatever divided a given group from the rest of christendom, it was ideologically out of the question to treat it as more important than that which all had in common, the christian faith and its obligation to treat all its adherents as brothers and sisters. Even mere claims to cultural uniqueness would have been too alien to christian discourse to be conceivable. As a consequence, rivalry between communities translated into claims not, as is the case now, to possess what others did not (a unique language and/or culture, unique political traditions), but to possess to a greater degree what all had in common. For example, greater ancientness within the universal history, or the ability to identify one's forebears all the way back to Noah (even though Noah was of course everybody else's ancestor as well), or special association with a hero (like Alexander) who was precisely not a hero only of one's own community (or even a member of that community, for that matter) but an idol of the entire civilization.

The declaration of Arbroath—whose Scottish myth of origin lacks any specifically Scottish aspect, instead consisting of elements found in all such tales of the period—well illustrates the tension between the particular identity of given communities and the universal christian identity. On the one hand, it sharply distances itself from the English adversary and accuses the English king (Edward I, the predecessor of the king then reigning) of a long list of crimes:

> The offences, murders, brutalities, depredations, acts of arson, incarcerations of bishops, burnings of monasteries, despoliations and killings of monks, and other enormous and innumerable deeds that he committed against the said people [*populus*, the Scots], without sparing anyone

and having regard neither to age nor to gender, neither to clerical nor to secular rank, no one can write down or comprehend fully who has not experienced them.

On the other hand, the declaration appeals to the pope as the common superior of the Scots and English, on the basis of an ideology, the christian faith, that demands humility not pride, and universal reconciliation (among its followers) rather than the erecting of barriers between them.

Therefore, reverend father and lord, we beseech you with urgent pleas, and genuflecting in our hearts, that, with a pure heart and a pious mind, considering that before him whose vice-gerent on earth you are there is no importance attached to, or distinction made between, Jews and Greeks, Scots and English, and viewing with fatherly eyes the tribulations and anguish visited upon us and god's church by the English, it may please you to exhort and admonish the king of the English, who should be satisfied with what he has, seeing that there was a time when England sufficed for seven or more kings, to leave us Scots alone, who live in narrow Scotland, beyond which there is no habitable land at all, and who ask for nothing but that which is ours. To be able to live undisturbed we are genuinely ready to do for him what is in our power, as long as our standing is respected.[185]

In its deliberately convoluted phrasing, this is period rhetoric at its best (or worst, as with today's stylistic preferences one might be tempted to say). This is the key passage into which whoever drew it up invested a great deal of thought, seeking to minimize the audacity of asking the pope to change his mind—he had excommunicated Robert Bruce—by almost drowning the request itself in manifestations of deference on the one hand, clever arguments on the other. Several arguments are built into the passage to sway the pope, and they all hit hard, beginning with the clever allusion to the first chapter of Romans on the universality of the christian religion and its disregard for cultural differences—astutely turned here into an implicit call on the pope not to adopt a one-sidedly English attitude. This is reinforced by the reminder that any suffering inflicted on the Scots, more particularly their clergy and monasteries, was also inflicted on the universal church, of which the Scots were a part (note that even though, in terms of rhetorical technique, the passage on the crimes of the English poses as a *praeteritio*—'we shall not go into those English misdeeds'—bishops and monks are specifically identified as victims). Equally to the point is the observation that England used to be not one kingdom but several, and that the Scots had nowhere to go. The text seems to insinuate that they would be willing to move if it were possible; even though it is not, they still offer to meet any reasonable demands the English king might have.

The beneficiaries of the political myths of christendom were not so much placed side by side as they all gravitated towards a common centre: not so much keeping their distance from one another and separately guarding a different heritage each, than almost jostling each other in their rush to claim their portion of what was, on the contrary, a common heritage. Their shared reliance, even dependence on a common centre at the same time meant that they did not have to be self-sufficient ('sovereign'), since it was not only permissible, but desirable or even imperative for them to be part of a greater whole. As a result, the beneficiaries of such myths, the possessors of a political self, could be more

[185]In the last sentence of this passage, I borrow the rendering of *status* as 'standing', as literal as it is ingenious, from the trans. by Archibald Duncan (reprinted as an appendix to Cowen 2003).

heterogeneous than today's nation-states (which conform to a single type): peoples, ruling families, cities, institutions like bishoprics, monasteries. Today's states or nations are all manifestations of the same basic concept, which however in each instance is filled with a substantive content deemed to be individual, unique. Conversely, in Latin christendom we find the same substantive material (e.g. myths about Trojan origin) invoked by actors, institutions, or communities representing more than one basic type. The same stories are routinely invoked by more than one party, indeed, in the case of the common religion, which was not the least ingredient of political identity, by all.

3.3.2.2 *Space and collective identities as mirrored in language*

The implied willingness of the Scots to move to some other land if only they could illustrates once more that the identity of a people was not tied to the territory it currently inhabited, that space was not an integral part of communal identity. By contrast, present-day political identity is bound up with a specific territory. In today's world, consciously or not most people constantly situate politics in space, with the aid of maps ubiquitously displayed (e.g. in television news) and which most people have partly memorized. The shape of a country on maps is in itself part of the identity of the people living there. Even if they were only shown that shape or outline, without any labelling or cartographic context, I suspect that most people in today's world would be able to identify 'their' country immediately, and a number of others besides. At the same time, this kind of symbolic depiction of the territory of a state presupposes a larger whole into which the pictorial representation of the territory of a given state fits like a piece of a puzzle—a system, in other words, both made up of similar such units, similarly representable, and static. A political community nowadays has a fixed position in space, its very own territory or country—and that, in the popular perception, from the very beginning. I cannot think of any twentieth-century state that is not regarded as existing on the territory that from time immemorial has supposedly been that of the people to which that state is considered to belong. According to today's worldview, a state cannot have been resident first in one country, then in another: a given state is inseparably connected to a given country. For a present-day political community, the notion that it is, or once was, migratory is inconceivable—whereas many a political community of Latin christendom considered that very notion a core part of its identity.

Of course, the emphasis on clearly delimited space that is characteristic of the present-day state presupposes certain methods, which are also conventions, of modelling, representing territory. Among those methods and conventions are the treatment of the problem of representing a three-dimensional body (the globe) in two dimensions (e.g. by means of the Mercator projection) or the orienting of maps in such a way that north is up. The importance of space, and of the representation of space, to politics has grown in tandem with the progress made in cartography from the sixteenth century onwards. In pre-Reformation Latin christendom there were no maps that offered scale models of space, by means of which space of any size could be experienced directly and instantaneously, if vicariously. Instead, in that period, space, if it extended beyond the horizon, could still be experienced only with the help of time, by travelling. (It will be remembered that in the negotiations, mentioned in the last chapter, between Aristagóras of Mílêtos and king Kleoménês of Lakedaímôn about the possibility of conquering the Persian empire,

the size of that empire played no role, but only the distance, measured in daily stages, between the coast and the Persian royal capital.)

Maps of the world (*mappae mundi*) of quite homogeneous design were common in Latin christendom, and they attest to a geographical 'worldview' markedly different from today's.[186] Such maps are round, depicting the earth as a disc divided by seas, which branch off from the ocean surrounding the disc and which are shaped something like a capital 'T'. East is up. The upper half of the landmass, above the horizontal bar of the T, is Asia, the lower left-hand quarter, to the left of the vertical bar of the T, is Europe, and the lower right-hand quarter is Africa. In the middle of the map, just above the point where the horizontal bar of the T meets the vertical one and often marked in an eye-catching way, is Jerusalem, the centre of the world. (Troy is also normally marked, as Vergil gives its approximate location: on the Asian side of the Hellespont, within sight of the island of Ténedos—now Bozcaada.)[187] Such maps are not to scale; indeed their often very schematic character suggests that indicating spatial extent, even distance, was regarded as less important than relative position in terms of direction.

With maps of this kind, territory could not be identified by its contours, since its location and extent in relation to a larger whole could only be indicated very approximately. Territory (or a conventional, formalized representation of it) thus could not serve as a marker of identity; nor, by the same token, need it be static. It took on the identity of its inhabitants rather than the other way around, and could even move with them. Peoples gave their name to the lands they inhabited, rather than taking their name from those lands as they do now. This is particularly evident in a category of names of countries or regions in central European Germanic (including Old English) that are simply the same as the names of the inhabitants. In today's English, few such names survive, and they are not immediately recognizable. The word 'Wales' (Old English *Wealas*) originally designated Celts. (The word stem here—Celtic itself—is the same as in Latin *Galli* 'Gauls', Latin *Celtae* 'Celts', and Greek *Galátai* 'Celts'.) Speakers of Celtic encountered by Germanic speakers in Britain were the original Britons, whose language is now only spoken in the part of Britain that has taken on their name: Wales. (In central Europe, Celts were Gauls, which by the end of the first millennium meant speakers of a Romance language, Old French: hence *walen* 'Walloons'—that is, French-speaking Belgians—in today's Dutch. In German, the meaning of the now-obsolete noun *Walen* first widened to include speakers of *any* Romance language, then narrowed again to designate speakers of Italian; the adjective *welsch*—originally, *walisch*—still means 'Italian'.)

In German, the names of the four major German peoples are all identical with the names of regions: *Sachsen* 'Saxons' also means 'Saxony', *Bayern* 'Bavarians' also means 'Bavaria', *Schwaben* 'Swabians' also means 'Swabia'. *Franken* can likewise refer both to a region in Germany and to its inhabitants, but the region in question represents only a tiny fraction of the territory once belonging to the Franks. In English this region is now called 'Franconia' (and the inhabitants 'Franconians'—a name derived from the name of the territory). To be sure, present-day Bavaria and Swabia are also much smaller than the homonymous territory of a millennium ago. Present-day 'Saxony', like Franconia, is only an appendix of the original territory, but the extent of the latter is

[186] See e.g. the abundant illustrations in Kugler (2001).
[187] Vergil, *Aeneid* 2.21.

still roughly indicated by today's federal states of Lower Saxony and Saxony-Anhalt. Some Saxons, of course, even settled in Britain. Here, too, parts of the country—that is, territory—still bear names that originally were also, and primarily, those of subgroups of Saxons, even though that is not immediately apparent to speakers of today's English—for example 'Essex' (*east-seaxe* or *east-seaxan*: 'east Saxons') or 'Sussex' (*suth-*). The same phenomenon underlies the names 'Norfolk' and 'Suffolk', originally designating, respectively, the northern and southern Angles *and* the territory where they lived; as in the other English instances, those names now refer to territory only. The eastern branch of the British Angles inhabited a territory originally called the same as they, *east engle* (or *englan*), but that appellation of the territory is now only used in a Latinized version: East Anglia. By contrast, a peninsula in northernmost Germany—northeast of the town of Schleswig—is still known as *Angeln*, the same word that, in German, also means 'Angles'. The reason for this is, of course, that this is the region (or part of it) from which the Angles (or some of them) originally migrated to Britain.

Significantly, instances of countries or regions bearing German or Dutch names identical to those of the inhabitants are geographically limited to that part of the world that was within the circle of vision of speakers of central European Germanic around the turn of the second millennium—further instances in German and Dutch mostly refer to neighbouring Scandinavian and Slavic peoples.[188] Equally within that circle of vision are *all* the German and Dutch compound names of countries formed by appending *-land* or some other word designating territory (like *Mark* 'march', i.e. a border territory) to the names of peoples—strikingly, there are no instances of compound names of this particular type from other parts of the world at all. *Griechenland* (Dutch *Griekland*) 'Greece' is the southernmost country whose German and Dutch appellation is of this type, the explanation for which is the great political and cultural importance of the empire of Constantinople to central Europe (it was that empire that the name originally designated). All other such names are clustered in western and northern Europe.[189]

The same phenomenon is still found in English, too, though unless one counts 'Denmark' it is limited to the British Isles as well as, again, mostly somewhat masked. Thus, whereas in the case of 'Scotland' the first part of the word still recognizably refers to the inhabitants, this is less immediately apparent in the case of 'England' and 'Ireland'. Today's English moreover has 'Cumbria' alongside 'Cumberland', 'Northumbria' alongside 'Northumberland'. 'Cumbria' (like 'East Anglia') is actually the Latinization of an Old English term once more designating both a people *and* their land—*cumbre* being derived from the word used by the Celtic Britons to describe themselves, *cymry* (in today's Welsh, accordingly the same word designates the Welsh). Likewise, 'Northumbria' is derived from Old English *northanhumbre* (or *northhumbre*), designating both the people *and* the land north of the Humber.

[188]e.g. German *Schweden* 'Swedes'/'Sweden', *Preussen* 'Prussians'/'Prussia', *Pommern* 'Pomeranians'/'Pomerania', *Polen* 'Poles'/'Poland', *Böhmen* 'Bohemians'/'Bohemia', *Ungarn* 'Hungarians'/'Hungary'. To this should be added *Burgund* 'Burgundy', abridged, it would appear, from Middle High German *Burgunden* 'Burgundians'.

[189]e.g. German *Irland*, *England*, *Schottland*, *Friesland* 'Frisia', *Jütland*, *Dänemark*, *Finnland*, *Lappland*, *Estland* 'Estonia', *Lettland* 'Latvia', *Livland* 'Livonia', *Russland* 'Russia', and further names from those same parts of the world; as well as *Frankreich* ('realm of the Franks') 'France'. In every case, the first part of those names designates a people (mostly by the word stem only, without the plural ending *-en*).

A region could thus be referred to by the name of its inhabitants alone or, especially if clarity required it, by the name of the inhabitants plus *-land*. (Occasionally both forms exist side by side, or have done so in the past—as in *Bayern/Bayernland* 'Bavaria'.) This close linguistic link between peoples and the geographical space they occupied seems to be a particularity of central European Germanic, presumably because in the vast expanse where it was spoken there was room for numerous clearly distinct groups even though they shared a mutually intelligible language. Names in Nordic Germanic, by contrast, display few traces of this importance attached to collective identities. As far as I can tell, there are no instances in Danish, Icelandic, Norwegian, or Swedish of the names of peoples being also used, without modification, to indicate the geographical space associated with them, and relatively few instances of the names of regions formed by combining the designation of the inhabitants with a word denoting territory.[190]

As mentioned, in today's German only regions that were on the cultural map of speakers of German around the turn of the second millennium have names combining names of peoples with a suffix indicating territory. Otherwise, in today's German, as in English and other European languages, the inhabitants of countries are invariably referred to by attaching appropriate suffixes to the names of the countries themselves—Japan thus being inhabited by the 'Japanese' (German: *Japaner*, French: *Japonais*), Bolivia by the 'Bolivians' (*Bolivianer*, *Boliviens*). A particularly striking illustration of this pattern is 'Italians' (called something similar in other European languages, too, including their own: *Italiani*). Early speakers of Latin called the inhabitants of the peninsula where they themselves lived *Itali*. The land where those people lived was given a name derived from that of the inhabitants by adding the appropriate suffix to the stem: *Italia*. Much later, when space had become politically more important, a new name for the inhabitants was in turn created by adding a suffix to the word for the country, rather than going back to the original name, by then obsolete.

The use of the names of peoples to designate territory in German, Dutch, and English, and the forming of the names of countries by adding a suffix like *-land* to the names of peoples, in that part of the world familiar to speakers of central European Germanic (including Old English) in the late first/early second millennium, dimly reflects a vanished pattern of thought that identified space with people rather than people with space—a pattern no doubt also traceable in other languages: *Italia* being an example of the same phenomenon in pre-christian Latin, as are *Gallia*, *Germania*, or, dating from the period of Latin christendom, *Francia* and *Anglia*. Borders did not primarily exist in space; rather, *Schwaben*, *Preussen*, 'Norfolk', or 'Wales' were where one encountered Swabians, Prussians, the northern Angles, or the speakers of Welsh. Territory conceived in this fashion need not be fixed in space. Thus, the Burgundians apparently took their name from the island of Bornholm in the Baltic, which seems originally to have been called simply *Burgund(e)*. This is a Germanic adjective (a participle?), whose somewhat conjectural meaning was probably 'high', 'situated on high', 'looming', or 'tall', conceivably referring to the high cliffs in the northeastern part of the island. Around 900, the English traveller Wulfstan speaks of the island as *Burgenda land*, 'land of the Burgundians' (cf. e.g. in the

[190] Those instances do include *Sverige* 'Sweden' < *Svea-rike*, 'realm of the Svear', a people in the Stockholm area; *Finland*; *Finnmark*, a province in northern Norway; *Götaland* in southern Sweden, named after the Goths, as is the island of *Gotland*; and *Bornholm* (< *Borgundarholm*, island of the Burgundians).

same text, *Iraland* 'land of the Irish, Ireland', *Northmanna land*, 'land of the Northmen, Norway'), and notes that the inhabitants had their own king. Not much later, however, the island became subject to the Danish ruler. The Danes called it *Borgundarholm*, that is 'island of the Burgundians', a word that has since eroded into *Bornholm*.

Early first-millennium sources speak of a people called *Burgundiones*. The oldest sources (Pliny the Elder, Ptolemy the geographer) would appear to place them south of the Baltic, between the Odra (Oder) and Wisa (Weichsel) rivers but separated from the sea by the *Rugi*. It could be that the name *Burgundiones* refers to some 'high place' different from the island, or to the tallness of the people, or that it has some other etymology entirely—in which case the inhabitants of the island came to share the name by a linguistic accident. Yet in the absence of firm evidence pointing either way (archaeological evidence previously adduced is now generally discounted), the view that the *Burgundiones* were of Scandinavian origin and took their name from the island strikes me as the more plausible. By the second quarter of the millennium, the *Burgundiones*, or some of them, were (again?) on the move, some migrating southeast, reaching the area north of the Black Sea, others migrating into what is now Germany. By the turn of the fifth century, there was a kingdom of the Burgundians on the Rhine, in the general area of Worms, which may have been its capital.

This kingdom was destroyed by the Huns in 436—a catastrophe echoed in the *Nibelungenlied*, an epic poem in Middle High German, which has a sister of king Gunther (Gundaharius/Gundicharius in fifth/sixth-century sources) of the Burgundians marry king Attila so as to be able to engineer her revenge on Gunther and his court for the murder of her husband. In typical Middle High German fashion, this text refers to the realm of the Burgundians indifferently as *Burgunden* or *Burgundenland*, that is, by the name of the inhabitants with or without the addition *-land* (the latter form equivalent to Wulfstan's *Burgenda land*). Aware that the events by which he was inspired lay in a nebulous past, the author seems to have found nothing unusual in identifying a territory as 'Burgundy' that by the time he wrote—around 1200—was no longer situated anywhere near Worms, their capital in his text: the 'kingdom of Burgundy' in his day comprised what is now western Switzerland and adjacent parts of what is now France including the area now called Burgundy, or, in French, *Bourgogne* (< Latin *Burgundia*).

This was because their defeat by the Huns prompted the Burgundians to shift further to the south and west, where they refounded a kingdom soon absorbed into the Frankish kingdom (but later revived under Frankish auspices). The territory will presumably now stay put until the designation is forgotten, since the Burgundians no longer exist as an ethnic community, and countries are no longer named after their inhabitants but the other way around—as a result of which there still *are* Burgundians in the sense of inhabitants of Burgundy. Interestingly, the first occurrence of the Latin term *Burgundia* is in a letter, presumably composed by Cassiodorus, from Theoderic to the king of the Burgundians (*Variae* 1.46). As the context makes clear, Cassiodorus as yet uses the term to designate not a country or territory, but the Burgundians as a people along with their culture, which Theoderic in his letter hopes that the gift that he is sending, of a water clock and what sounds like an astronomical clock, will improve. The fact that the name Burgundy has survived at all seems to be due to the circumstance that, already in the third quarter of the first millennium, even the Gallo-Roman inhabitants of the area then identified as Burgundy adopted the name 'Burgundians' for themselves, assuming as part of a local myth of origin that the Burgundians had exterminated the original inhabitants and that

they were all descendants of the 'conquerors' (this story is told in the eighth-century life of Saint Sigismund, king of the Burgundians, the *Passio Sigismundi*). In fact, the migrants may have been relatively few—perhaps numbering in the tens of thousands—and appear to have got on well with the Gallo-Roman population; the Roman authorities treated them as *foederati*—allies—and assigned them land after their defeat by the Huns.[191]

The Trojan myth became spatially sensitive, as it were, only in the sixteenth century. Only then did Frenchmen begin to take exception to the notion that the Franks/Frenchmen were immigrants rather than residing on native soil. Soon the story of the Trojan origin of the Franks was modified by claiming that the origin of the Franks was really France, from where they had gone to Asia Minor to found Troy, later to return to their native land when Troy was destroyed—a story subscribed to for example by Jean Bodin. (This retelling of the story was not totally divorced from historical fact: in the third century BCE, Celts—in Greek: *Galátai*—from Gaul indeed invaded Asia Minor and occupied a region later named after them. They kept their language, which Saint Jerome, in the fourth century, asserted to be akin to that of the Treveri, the Celtic people that gave its name to Trier.)[192] Even in historiographical retrospective, 'France' is nowadays conceived as the space encompassed by the present borders of the French Republic, which the country only attained in the 1860s and from which for the greater part of the history of the west Frankish/French kingdom it remained quite distant: those of the *hexagone*, an expression frequently used as a synomym for 'France' and which in itself represents a striking illustration of the fixation on space of present-day nationalist discourse. So common is the idea of France as a distinctive space that since the introduction of the euro as the new European Union currency in 2002, all French euro coins have a (geometrical!) hexagon on their 'national' side (euro coins have a 'European' side that is always identical, whereas on the other side the emitting government can put what it pleases). On the euro bills (which are uniform) the outline of the European continent is used as a symbol of European identity, with little insert maps for the French overseas possessions Guyana, Guadeloupe, Martinique, and Réunion.

3.3.2.3 *Political community in central Europe in the early second millennium*

Around the year 1080, an unknown author, somehow connected to Siegburg abbey near Cologne, composed the *Annolied* or Song of Anno, in the vernacular Middle High German. Dedicated to archbishop Anno II of Cologne (∼1010–1075), its purpose evidently was to promote the hoped-for canonization of its hero (which, however, only eventually took place in 1183) and advertise his tomb at Siegburg abbey as a place where the deceased worked miracles, bringing the abbey to the attention of prospective pilgrims. More relevantly for our purposes, the *Annolied* is a striking testimony of the concern of people at the time to locate any particular (local or personal) history in the universal history common to all christendom. Furthermore, it sheds light on the conception of political community shared by the author and his intended audience.

The text offers surprisingly few details of the life of its hero—but, in a very grand manner, puts him in a larger context. The narrative offers nothing less than a

[191] LdM 'Bornholm', 'Burgund'; Kaiser (2004).
[192] Beaune (1985: 334–5); Huppert (1965: 233); LdA 'Galatia'.

short history of the world, beginning with the creation (a habit also found in most chronicles of the period). It briefly recapitulates the series of the four world empires—the Assyrian/Babylonian empire, the 'Chaldean' (Persian) empire, the 'Greek' empire (of Alexander of Macedon), and the empire of Rome. It alludes to the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* (Troy besieged for ten years; Agamémnôn murdered; *Ulix*—from the Latin *Ulyxes* = *Ulysses*, Odysseús—and the cyclops) and, of course, the *Aeneid*: some Trojans settle in Italy and eventually found Rome. The Romans, the author reminds his audience, at first wanted no king: instead, three hundred *altheirrin* deliberated 'by day and by night' (literally, 'old lords': the word is clearly intended as a calque of the Latin *senatores*, derived from *senes* 'old'; cf. English 'aldermen', i.e. elder men, elders). The senators gave orders to the *herzogin* (nominative plural), 'dukes'. Presumably this means military commanders (often called *duces* in Latin sources; the German word, now a title like its English equivalent, likewise originally designated leaders in battle), though it could also refer to the consuls. It was the senators who instructed Julius Caesar to 'fight against the German lands' (*diutsche lant* in the text, which would be *deutsche Lande* in present-day German, stanza 18).

The text has Caesar subjugate each of the four German peoples in turn, affording the author the opportunity to recount the myth of origin of each. On his return to Rome, Caesar meets with rejection because of his insubordination. Annoyed, he goes back to the German lands: having experienced their bravery, he enters into an alliance with the lords there. Leading a great number of troops from Gaul and Germany, Caesar once more returns to Rome, where Cato and Pompey and the entire senate (*al der senâtus*) flee before him. He chases them all the way to Egypt, and defeats Pompey. Back in Rome, Caesar rewards his 'German warriors'—since then held in esteem by Rome—with gifts. (Gaul and Germany: of course the Franks as one of the German peoples were also strong in Gaul; moreover, the Rhine was apparently considered to mark the boundary between the two, which left Cologne and Siegburg in Gaul.)

This version of the Roman conquest of Germany evidently has a political agenda. In reality, the Romans were only able to acquire a relatively small part of Germany durably. In formulating this last sentence, I have followed a present-day habit of looking at the matter: in spatial terms. But this is clearly not how our eleventh-century author viewed the situation: he does not think in terms of territory but in terms of people(s). For him, if Caesar conquered all of Germany it meant not all of its territory but all of its peoples. And whether the history books said so or not, he had to have conquered all four German peoples (never mind that in fact only the Swabians even existed back then) because in light of their mutual rivalry in eleventh-century Germany it would not have done to saddle some but not all with the ignominy of defeat. At least, defeat by the great Julius Caesar was not all that dishonourable, especially as according to the *Annolied* Caesar was so impressed by his German adversaries that he subsequently called on them to help him disempower the senate: a victory achieved with German help thus stood at the beginning of the (monocratic) empire of Rome.

Although this is not spelled out, the special relationship thus established between Germany and Rome of course tied in with the fact that the Roman imperial dignity had, by the eleventh century, passed to German rulers. The text goes on to note that Caesar was succeeded by the famous Augustus, and that numerous towns in Germany are Roman foundations—asserting for example that Augsburg (*Owisburg* in the text), founded by Augustus' stepson Drusus, is named after Augustus, and that Cologne was founded by

(Augustus' friend and supporter) 'prince Agrippa' and named *Colonia Agrippina* after him. (An error: it was named after Agrippina, the wife of Augustus' fourth successor Claudius—she was born at Cologne.) The text recalls that it was likewise under Augustus that, accompanied by miraculous portents, the birth of Christ took place—the timing, in the eyes of Latin christendom, not at all fortuitous, but proof that the Roman (monocratic) empire enjoyed special divine approval (we shall return to this).

Saint Peter then wins Rome for Christ, and sends one Maternus 'to preach to the Franks' and become the first bishop of Cologne. (Which it seems he was, though the text compresses the time frame a bit—Maternus is listed, in his capacity as bishop of Cologne, among the participants of the synod of Rome of 313, and thus could not have known Peter.) Anno, the text observes (in stanza 33), was Maternus' thirty-third successor—this kind of numbering of incumbents being a staple of the period. Only the remaining third of the poem finally deals with the life, death, and posthumous career of Anno himself. For example, trusted by the emperor Henry III, Anno acts as regent for the underage king Henry IV (king, because when the *Annolied* was written he had not yet received the imperial coronation in Rome), and receives 'gifts'—evidently as tokens of esteem—from the rulers of the 'English lands', of Russia, or of 'Greece' (Constantinople). Towards the end of his life, the *rîche—Reich*: 'realm' or 'empire'—lapses into civil war, causing Anno to despair of life (he dies a painful death, tried by his sufferings in the manner of Job, but like an eagle rises to heaven).[193]

The *Annolied* displays a kind of multilayered patriotism. It is clear that its author was fiercely loyal to Siegburg abbey, which Anno had founded and where he chose to be buried. He was likewise proud of nearby Cologne, calling it 'the finest town ever established in the German lands' (stanza 7). If, as seems plausible, he came from the Cologne area, he would have been Frankish. To be sure, he is assiduously even-handed in his treatment of the four German peoples, letting all four be defeated by Caesar and crediting all four with an overseas origin, even though in the case of the Swabians he was at a loss to identify the location that they had come from. Yet he calls the Franks (and them alone) 'noble', expressly observes that in their case Caesar defeated his 'relatives', and devotes not one stanza to their myth of origin as in the case of the other three peoples but two stanzas. True, the same two stanzas also tell the parallel Roman myth of origin, but the parallel itself enhanced the standing of the Franks. Conversely, he cannot refrain from a slight barb against the Saxons (only against them), accusing them of 'faithlessness' towards the Thuringians in their endeavour to gain their current territory. This would appear to be a reflection of the long-standing latent antagonism between Franks and Saxons.

The praise of Cologne also strikes another recurrent theme: pride in the 'German lands' themselves. The *Annolied* speaks of them in the plural: *deutsche Lande*. The singular *Deutschland* is generally thought not to have come into use until the early sixteenth century. In fact it *is* found already in the eleventh century—albeit in Latin: in a text practically contemporary with the *Annolied*, Bruno of Magdeburg speaks of Germany as *Teutonica terra*, which for all the world looks like a Latin calque of *Deutschland*. Still, the plural form as employed in the *Annolied* remained the norm in the pre-Reformation

[193] *rîche*: the circumflex accent is a present-day editorial convention to mark, in Middle High German texts, the long [i:] that a sound shift taking place in some German dialects—including today's standard German—would later change to [ai].

period (and is familiar even now, even though it is now only used poetically or ironically). Of course, as noted, the *Annolied* also speaks of the 'English lands' in the plural, a reminiscence perhaps of the plural Anglo-Saxon kingdoms.[194]

Like its western counterpart (France), the east Frankish realm, originally created by Frankish expansion, by the eleventh century no longer existed because of the ability of some power to keep it together by force. Instead, it continued to exist because its inhabitants identified with it. It was, not least, a *linguistic* community, comprising almost all the central European speakers of the Germanic language (whereas the Franks of the western realm came to adopt the language of the Gallo-Roman majority). In the pre-Reformation period, the varieties of Germanic spoken in central Europe were considered one language, as, for that matter, were the varieties of Slavic spoken further east. Thus, in 1356 the emperor Charles IV decreed that the heirs apparent of the seven electors—those princes of the Holy Roman Empire entitled to elect the emperor—should receive linguistic training. Apart from German as their native tongue (*Theutonicum ydioma sibi naturaliter inditum*), they were also to be instructed in the 'grammatical', Italian, and 'Slavic' languages (*in gramatica, Italica ac Sclavica lingwis instruantur*—the 'grammatical' language, or language of the grammarians, being Latin), on the grounds that those languages were the most important for the affairs of the empire.[195] This takes the existence of a native tongue common to princes from different parts of the German realm for granted, as well as the existence of a native tongue common to the Slavic peoples (in the Latin text, *lingwis* 'languages' is plural because several are enumerated, but the adjective *Sclavica* is in the singular). Personally very familiar with the Slavic world and fluent in Czech as well as German, Charles knew what he was saying. With no written standards (a precondition for letting minor morphological and pronunciation differences serve as markers for separate idioms) and an infinity of local and regional variants, mutual intellibigility was the key to determining who spoke one's language and who did not—in fact a vehicular standard form of educated German evolved quite early, reflected for example by the *Annolied* or the *Nibelungenlied*.

The only major Germanic-speaking populations to remain outside the east Frankish realm were the Anglo-Saxons, on account of their insular situation (not to mention the fact that the Norman conquest of 1066 disempowered the speakers of Old English), and the Scandinavians, speakers of a type of Germanic whose grammatical particularities (definite articles appended to the noun, the passive voice formed with suffixes rather than auxiliary verbs) from central European Germanic are too marked to allow speakers of those two major variants of Germanic to communicate. The importance of language for political community is well illustrated by the fact that the Jutland peninsula, where

[194]In today's German, the plural of *Land* 'land' is *Länder* if the reference is to discrete, countable units (e.g. countries, states), but *Lande* (which nowadays sounds quaint) if the reference is more vaguely to a geographical space of large extent (as in the English 'lands'). Middle High German only has the latter plural (the nominative plural here being identical with the singular—*lant*, in the spelling of the *Annolied*—whereas today's German adds the ending *-e* in the nominative plural). The *Annolied* always speaks of 'the German lands' in the plural, except in stanzas 7 and 24, where the singular occurs. But Kathryn Smits (1977) has shown that in Middle High German the construction employed in those two instances (preposition + a dative singular noun without any article) was used to express the location of something, or movement towards something, that was actually conceived of as plural, so the exceptions are only apparent. On *deutsche Lande* vs. *Deutschland* cf. Schubert (1998). *Teutonica terra*: Bruno of Mageburg, S*axonicum bellum* 129.

[195]Golden Bull §31 (Zeumer 1913: 213).

Danish is spoken, was never part of the German realm. If military factors had played any role here, the lack of a defensible natural border between small Jutland and vast central Europe, and the fact that the latter was far more populous, would have made Jutland an automatic target of conquest. Not for nothing the German (and Dutch) name for Germany—*Deutschland* (*Duitsland*)—combines the noun 'land', that is country, with the word for a *language*: *deutsch* (*duits*). Originally spelled *theodisk* or *thiudisk*, this word itself denotes community, being derived from a now obsolete noun meaning 'people' (*theod* in Old English), with the corresponding adjective formed by appending the adjectival suffix *-isk* (as it still is in the Nordic languages; *-ish* in English, *-isch* in German and Dutch, though the latter may reduce this syllable to *-s*, as is the case precisely with the word *duits*).

The word is first found in the fourth-century Germanic (Gothic) translation of the bible by Wulfila to render Greek *ethnikós* in Galatians 2.14. It next appears in the extant sources in a report probably by a certain Wigbod, a cleric at the court of the Frankish king, Charles I, who acted as an observer for the Frankish court of synods held in England (where he accompanied envoys of the pope). In 786, decisions taken at one English synod in the presence of the archbishop of York and the local king, Aelfwald, were announced at another synod in the presence of the archbishop of Canterbury and king Offa and his warriors: *clara voce singula capitula perlecta sunt et tam latine quam theodisce*, 'each single paragraph was read out in a loud voice, both in Latin and in the language of the people.' After that, the word appears with a certain frequency in official or officious Carolingian texts. In 788, the *Annals of the Frankish Kingdom* report the trial of the duke of the Bavarians Tassilo, accused of having left the royal army with his followers without authorization: *quod theodisca lingua herisliz dicitur*, 'which in the language of the people is called *herisliz*' (*Heerschlitz*, *Heerschleiss*, a German word now obsolete: the 'slicing', i.e. tearing apart, of the *Heer* or army). In fact, the 'language of the people' was also the language of the king, as shown by his *Capitulare italicum* of 801. This royal decree refers to the same crime: *quod nos teudisca lingua dicimus herisliz*, 'what we, in the language of the people, call *Heerschlitz*'.[196]

From the tenth century, Latin texts abandoned *theodiscus* and its spelling variants in favour of *teutonicus*. The reason probably was that, a vernacular word pragmatically Latinized by Carolingian administrators without much regard to stylistic niceties, *theodiscus* came to be regarded as 'barbaric'. What those who coined that word had done was take a Germanic adjective, itself derived from a noun by appending an adjectival ending: *theod* + *isk*, and turn it into a Latin adjective simply by sticking a Latin declension ending onto it: *theod* + *isc* + *us*. This is rather akin to present-day joke Latin that simply adds a Latin *-us* ending to an ordinary English word. Those with more linguistic sensitivity evidently felt that it would have been preferable, for example, to take the noun without the Germanic adjectival suffix *-isk* and instead append a Latin adjectival suffix like *-icus*. This yields the word *teuticus*, which around the turn of the millennium is indeed attested repeatedly. *teuticus* was not only more elegant, but also solved the problem that it is hard to see which syllable of *theodiscus* should carry the stress, owing to a clash between Germanic and Latin accentuation rules. The same problem arose in the case of *franciscus* 'Frankish' (hence *français* 'French'). That, too, seems to have grated on the linguistic

[196]MGH Ep. 4 p. 28; MGH SS 1 p. 172; MGH Capitularia 1 p. 205.

sensibilities for example of Einhard, who in his early ninth-century biography of Charles I uses *francicus* instead.[197]

If *teuticus* did not prevail, it was probably because people discovered that an (apparent) Latin equivalent of *theodiscus* already existed: Vergil (*Aeneid* 7.741) speaks of clubs hurled *teutonico ritu*, 'in the manner of the Teutons', Lucanus, also much read at the time, of *furor teutonicus*, 'the furor of the Teutons' (*Pharsalia* 1.255–6). Defeated by the Romans in Provence in 102 BCE, the Teutons—in Latin: *Teutoni* or, more rarely, *Teutones*—thereafter vanish from history. But the phonem *teut-* indeed is almost certainly identical with the word for 'people'. As a neologism, *teuticus* could not compete with a word found in classical texts. So *teutonicus*, deliberately employed as a superior alternative to *theodiscus*, now assumed the exact meaning of the latter word, referring primarily to the 'language of the people'. Those speaking that language were increasingly referred to as *Teutonici*, in the same manner as in English the adjective 'English', meaning a language, is also employed to designate the (original) people speaking it: 'the English'. By the thirteenth century, the vernacular equivalent *die Deutschen* (to employ present-day spelling) routinely appears in written texts, for example the widely used *Mirror of the Saxons*.[198]

The *Annolied* speaks of the 'German lands', but invariably refers to the German realm simply as *daz rîche* (*das Reich*) 'the realm', without any epithet. Written in the vernacular German, it could do this because speakers of this vernacular shared a single realm, and employing the vernacular word for 'realm' quite naturally designated that realm unless otherwise indicated. Conversely, the Latin equivalent of *rîche*, *regnum*, could be applied to any realm, not just the German, so if the German realm was to be designated then *regnum* had to be qualified by some addition. What we find in writers expressing themselves in Latin at about the time of the *Annolied*, like Lampert of Hersfeld or Bruno of Magdeburg, is usually either *regnum Teutonicum* or *regnum Teutonicorum*.[199] This could be translated roughly as 'German kingdom' and 'kingdom of the Germans' respectively, but doing so misses the essential point here, which is that, once again, *teutonicus* 'German' primarily refers to *language*. Lampert or Bruno or the other writers who speak of the German kingdom in Latin could have said *regnum Teutonorum* (or *Teutonum*) for 'kingdom of the Germans' (where *Teutonorum*/*Teutonum* is the genitive plural of *Teutoni*/*Teutones* respectively). Instead, rather than the original ethnic *Teutoni*/*Teutones*, they employed a new ethnic based on an adjective derived from the old one. The reason is that people like Lampert or Bruno did not in fact think of

[197] *Teutici* in a charter of Otto III from the year 1000, quoted Lerch (1970: 272); also in a charter for the bishopric of Würzburg from the same year, quoted Jakobs (1998: 42); *Theutica lingua* in a life of Saint Ulrich of Augsburg of about 990, quoted ibid.; Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni* 23. In Germanic, the appendix *-isk* cannot carry the stress (ENGlish, not engLISH). But in Latin, if *-us* is appended to *-isc* then *-isc must* carry the stress, which is always on the penultimate syllable if that has a vowel followed by more than one consonant—trying to say *THEOdiscus* is awkward and illustrates why Latin speakers would not normally do so. To judge by the present-day pronunciation of Italian *teDESco* 'German' (or the name *FranCESco*, Spanish *FranCISco*) normal Latin accentuation was adhered to in the case of *theodiscus* at least by those with a Romance linguistic background. But while this would not worry speakers of a Romance language, who were not familiar with the Germanic word, it must have sounded bizarre to native Germanic speakers.

[198] e.g. *Sachsenspiegel* Landrecht 3.52. On the origin of the word *deutsch* cf. Eggers (1970) and Haubrichs (1994).

[199] On this usage, see Thomas (1990) for Lampert and Eggert (1994) for Bruno.

themselves as Teutons (which they knew from Roman writers to have been destroyed long ago), only as speaking the same language—German, whose name *deutsch* they assumed, probably correctly, to be related to the name of the Teutons.[200]

Why did they not render *deutsch* as *Germanus*? As we saw, Jordanus of Osnabrück in the thirteenth century thought that *Germani* meant the (Frankish) inhabitants of the Rhineland, and that, for example, the Saxons were no *Germani*. His rather arbitrary explanation of the word indicates that it had no clear meaning at the time and was probably rare. By contrast, *teutonicus* recommended itself by its affinity, in terms of sound and etymology, with the vernacular word for the German language. By extension it also served as a convenient way to describe all those speaking it, and other things that they shared besides their language, such as their common *rîche* or realm. Put differently, speakers of German were called *Teutonici* precisely because they did *not* see themselves as one nation, a single ethnic group—although, nevertheless, they were linked by a certain amount of community feeling, a sentiment of mutual loyalty and obligation. If authors at the time had been looking for a *geographical* term for (the territory of) Germany they would no doubt have used *Germania*, as does Cosmas of Prague in his geographical description of Bohemia at the beginning of his chronicle: his assertion that Bohemia is part of *Germania* indicates both that the term was current in the early twelfth century and that it had no ethnic connotation. Conversely, it is striking that authors of that period dealing with Germany in the political sense always describe it by means of some expression referring to language (*regnum Teutonicorum*, *regnum Teutonicum*, *Teutonica terra*). Territory—which is what the word *Germania* designated—was not of primary political significance; its inhabitants were, and in the case of Germany what distinguished them was their common language.

In 1082, Bruno of Magdeburg composed a detailed history of the rebellion of the Saxons, the biggest of the four main German peoples, against the crown that had begun in 1073—the civil strife that so depressed the hero of the *Annolied* at the end of his life. Bruno seeks to justify the rebellion by giving a very negative picture of the king, Henry IV, issued from a Frankish dynasty (and once tutored by Anno). Remarkably, the idea that, given their discontent and power, the Saxons might secede from the realm seems no more to have occurred to Bruno than to the leaders of the rebellion. Instead, ardent apologist of the Saxons that he is, Bruno gives the impression of writing with a slightly bad conscience, induced by the feeling that the Saxons had brought discord on the *rîche*. Despite the legitimacy (as Bruno saw it) of their complaints, the Saxons in their own view apparently somehow fell short of an ideal of supra-ethnic unity, not, as today's political values might lead us to assume, an ideal of 'national' autonomy and separateness. In a way, perhaps their biggest grievance against the crown was to have forced them to act as they did.

The rebellion reflected alienation between the Saxons and the Frankish dynasty. From 919 to 1024, the crown of the east Frankish realm had been in the possession of the ducal dynasty of the Saxons. Thereafter, the new Frankish dynasty pursued a strategy of creating a power base of its own in Saxony, so as to keep the mighty Saxons under some

[200] In about 1004, Brun of Querfurt does employ *Theutoni* as well as *Theutones* rather than *T(h)eutonici*, speaking of Germany as *Theutonum tellus* 'land of the Teutons' and of Magdeburg as *nova metropolis Theutonorum* 'new archiepiscopal see of the Teutons' (quoted LdM 'Deutschland A.' col. 786). But I suspect that this usage is exceptional.

measure of control. Indeed, Henry III made Goslar, in Saxony, his preferred residence and the imperial palace there the largest of the realm. But when he died, his son and successor (probably born at Goslar) was only 5 years old, and during the regency which ensued much crown property was alienated by magnates, including in Saxony. After he came of age in 1065, Henry IV tried to recover what possessions, and control over the country, he could. Part of this strategy was the construction or strengthening of royal castles in Saxony, presumably garrisoned with non-Saxons, and resented by the natives.

Lampert of Hersfeld mentions as a main cause of the rebellion an alleged plan to hand Saxony to the Swabians:

> As general rumour later had it, he [king Henry] wanted . . . to destroy the Saxons completely and settle Swabians in their land. For this people [*gens*] he liked most of all, and many of them, persons of obscure ancestry, indeed almost no ancestry at all, he raised to the highest offices and gave them leading positions at court [*in palacio*]. The affairs of the realm [*regni negocia*] were administered at their pleasure. This had greatly embittered the princes [*principes*, i.e. the leading nobles] against him.[201]

Two issues appear to be intersecting here. On the one hand, there clearly was dissatisfaction among the great nobles with what they saw as undue preference given to persons not members of their class. Such persons owed their position solely to royal patronage. Since they depended on the crown much more than did the great nobles, they could be assumed by the king to be more loyal. On the other hand, interestingly people appear to have been quick to see an ethnic dimension to this kind of problem; a significant observation whether or not the suspicion that undue preference was given to Swabians was founded. It may well have been. Archbishop Anno, whom Lampert in fact admired, is a prime example of the phenomenon in question. A man of quite modest Swabian roots, he owed his immense influence to the favour shown him by the emperor. Henry III made him head of the prestigious college of canons that he had founded at Goslar to cement his position in Saxony also by ecclesiastical means. Anno was subsequently able to extend his own patronage to members of his family. After Anno became archbishop of Cologne, his previous post at Goslar went to his cousin Burchard, who was later given the Saxon bishopric of Halberstadt, and his brother Werner was in fact given the most important Saxon see, the archbishopric of Magdeburg.

It is also clear, however, that the ethnically based resentment to which Lampert alludes did not run deep. According to Bruno, the Swabians proposed an alliance to the Saxons, because they had heard of the latter's suffering, and he claims further that Henry was planning to oppress the Swabians, too.[202] Relations between Henry and the duke of Swabia, Rudolf of Rheinfelden, had been tense, but had recently been patched up when, in the context of negotiations in 1073 between Henry and the Saxons, a member of the king's entourage swore that he had been ordered by Henry to murder duke Rudolf, as well as Berthold, duke of Carinthia, another prominent Swabian and who likewise had a claim to the Swabian dukedom. Almost certainly a propaganda manoeuvre by the king's opponents, this may have given Bruno the idea that Henry was plotting against the Swabians, too, or the idea for claiming that he was. Had Bruno wished to justify an attempt at secession by the Saxons, he would not have been keen to stress that they

[201] Lampert, *Annals* for the year 1073.
[202] Bruno, *Saxonicum bellum* 16–17.

found sympathy, to the point of being offered an alliance, by another of the ethnic groups within the realm. Rather, the implied point here is that their rebellion against the crown was really not the fault of the Saxons but the king's. Conversely, both bishop Burchard of Halberstadt and archbishop Werner of Magdeburg joined the Saxon rebels, even though both, like Anno, were Swabians.

Only temporarily suppressed after a military victory of the king over the rebels in 1075, the conflict between Henry and the Saxons helped bring about the election of an anti-king in 1077. This step would hardly have been practical without the support of the Saxons. Yet the election took place at Forchheim in Swabia, and elevated to the kingship not one of the Saxons, but duke Rudolf. The Saxons had no presentable candidate of their own, their leader Otto of Northeim having compromised himself by entertaining an ambiguous relationship with Henry (although he did attend the Forchheim assembly). The notion of an alliance between the Saxons and the Swabians put forward by Bruno early on in his text may be designed to help explain the election of Rudolf rather than one of the Saxons. To be sure, Rudolf was fighting on the side of the king when he defeated the Saxons in 1075. But, according to Bruno, that was because Rudolf resented an earlier agreement between the king and the Saxons as a betrayal: filled with remorse, Rudolf and duke Berthold soon after take the initiative to renew their alliance with the Saxons.[203] Bruno says that it was 'the Saxons and Swabians' who gathered at Forchheim, and that it was they who elected Rudolf as 'their' king (*Rodulfum, ducem Suevorum, regem sibi Saxones et Suevi concorditer elegerunt*). Rather vaguely, Bruno asserts that the election assembly was attended 'also by delegates from (the) other regions' (*sed et de aliis regionibus legati aderant*—since Latin has no definite article, either translation is possible).[204] In fact, the assembly was thinly attended, and the only part of the realm where Rudolf found support was Saxony. The coronation of a new king would normally have taken place at Aachen, with the archbishop of Mainz officiating, but since Aachen was deemed unsafe, Mainz itself was chosen instead. Even here the coronation sparked an uprising of the burgesses, who expelled Rudolf and the archbishop from the city. Subsequently, Rudolf seems not to have felt safe even in his own Swabia, and kept to Saxony.

If the Saxons were one driving force behind the election of the anti-king, another was pope Gregory VII, the representative of a party within the church that called for its radical reform and in particular for its emancipation from all secular influence (resulting, not quite incidentally, in correspondingly greater power for the papacy itself). Since the German episcopate was intimately linked to the crown, enjoying its patronage while in turn shouldering much of the responsibility for administering the realm and ensuring its cohesion, the wearer of the German crown could not but attract the ire of the supreme pontiff. Indeed, as both the most important king in western christendom, and the only one whose dominions included a portion of Italy, he was predestined to become the main antagonist of the papacy; nor did it help that if king Henry and pope Gregory shared a personality trait, it was a penchant for confrontational, vindictive behaviour. The quarrel was ignited in 1075, two years after the first rising of the Saxons, over the appointment of the new archbishop of Milan (then part of the dominions of the German crown). It was Gregory who paved the way for Rudolf's election by excommunicating

[203] Bruno, *Saxonicum bellum* 35, 44, 46, 54.
[204] Bruno, S*axonicum bellum* 91.

Henry, declaring him deposed, and absolving everybody from their oath of loyalty to him. Bowing to pressure from the German princes, Henry, in January 1077, sought out the pope at Canossa and, by displaying contrition, forced Gregory to grant him absolution, which the church could not withhold from a repentant sinner. This did not stop the Forchheim election less than two months later, but certainly contributed to undermining Rudolf's position, despite the fact that Gregory, who no more trusted or liked Henry after his outward submission than before, eventually recognized the anti-king and then re-excommunicated Henry in 1080.

If excommunication of a king by the pope was unusual up till then, declaring him deposed was virtually unheard of. Gregory himself, in a letter to the bishop of Metz justifying his position, cites as a precedent the last Merovingian king, whom according to him the pope 'deposed [*deposuit*]', too. A good debating point: but the situation then was different. Although it is true that the papacy, in 751, approved the transferral of the Frankish kingship to the Carolingians and—this was particularly valuable for Gregory—agreed that the oath of loyalty to the former king could be regarded as void, that king had long lost his power anyway, and was deposed by the Carolingians rather than the papacy.[205] Henry for his part occupied Rome in 1084 and established the first of a series of anti-popes.

Gregory recognized Rudolf as king somewhat informally, simply by referring to him as such in correspondence, though without making clear exactly what Rudolf was king *of* in his eyes. In letters destined for general circulation in Germany and reproduced by Bruno, Gregory on one occasion addressed himself to all bishops, nobles, and other inhabitants of the *Teutonicum atque Saxonicum regnum*, 'the German and Saxon realm'. This has been interpreted[206] as deliberately implying the existence of not one kingdom but two, but in my opinion the intention could just as well have been to emphasize the unity of the one German realm despite the Saxon discontent. Immediately afterwards Bruno reproduces two letters from Gregory to Rudolf himself. In the second, the pope speaks of those who, together with king Rudolf, are staying in the 'realm of the Saxons' (*regnum Saxonum*). I am not sure that even this latter expression can be considered an indication of any recognition by the pope of a separate Saxon realm (and even if it were it would again be a recognition merely by implication and in passing, rather than being declared as such). The pope addresses Rudolf as *rex*, not as *rex Saxonum* (or *Teutonicorum*, for that matter). Widukind of Corvey, admittedly 100 years earlier, repeatedly speaks of Bavaria as a *regnum*, even though there had never been a king of Bavaria and Widukind clearly regarded it as part of the wider east Frankish realm. In 996, the eastern march of Bavaria is, in turn, first mentioned as *Ostarrichi* 'eastern *realm*', which became *Österreich* 'Austria'. Yet at no time did the word *Reich* (=*regnum*) in this name imply its status as a separate kingdom (which it only became in 1804 as the 'empire of Austria').[207]

Bruno himself, a little further on in his text, once speaks of the *Saxoniae regnum* (the kingdom of Saxony), and has 'our leaders' (those of the Saxons) discuss the situation

[205] The letter, of 1081, is reproduced by Bruno, *Saxonicum bellum* 73. In the MGH edn. of this letter (Ep. sel. 2.2, VIII.21), the passage in question is on p. 554.

[206] e.g. by Eggert (1994).

[207] Widukind 1.27 calls Bavaria a *regnum* (kingdom) but its leader a *dux* (duke). In 2.36 he speaks of Bavaria as a *regnum* and then just a few lines later as a *ducatus* (dukedom). For the 996 document see MGH Dipl. 2.2 no. 232.

of 'their' realm (*principes nostri congregati de statu regni sui tractarunt*). On a single occasion he calls Rudolf *rex Saxonum*, but this is again ambiguous: he does not do so in his own authorial voice, but reports a messenger as saying that Henry had boasted of the death of the 'king of the Saxons'. Shortly afterwards he reports that Henry departed for Italy, 'so as to sow discord there, too, just as previously he had done in the German land [*seminaturus et ibi, sicut pridem in Teutonica fecerat terra, discordiam*]'. In this context, 'the German land' can hardly have been intended to exclude Saxony (and note also that the king is censured for undermining *unity*).[208] The problem, for us, I think arises from our interpreting *regnum* as an exclusive, bounded entity, which people at the time did not. The problem is less, in fact, if we think of *regnum* as 'kingship' rather than 'kingdom'—denoting a dignity rather than a territory.

Rudolf died in 1080, having suffered, in battle against troops loyal to Henry, a wound to his right hand—the hand with which he had once sworn fealty to Henry, as some were quick to point out. At the initiative of the Saxons, a new anti-king was elected, again not just for the Saxons, but for the realm as a whole. According to Bruno, the Saxon leaders in calling for this new election emphasized their desire to restore unity. They

> sent messengers to all the peoples of German language, regardless of whether they were hostile or friendly, requesting that they should elect any ruler other than Henry or his son, and promising that they themselves would faithfully serve that ruler whoever he might be, so that all the members of the realm would be united under a single king as of old.[209]

Community of language clearly remained important politically even if the peoples sharing in it were currently hostile to each other. On the other hand, the fact that they could be collectively hostile to each other proves that the separate peoples were important, too. Bruno semantically treats 'peoples' as such as both addressees of the Saxon message and as autonomous actors: it is 'the peoples of German language' who are called upon to do something, concretely to elect themselves a new king. The new anti-king, Hermann, once again was no Saxon. He was, it is true, a protégé of one of the most powerful among the Saxon leaders, Welf IV, duke of Bavaria until deposed by Henry (since the tenth century, Bavaria had customarily had a Saxon duke, an arrangement dating from the time when the Saxon ducal dynasty had occupied the throne and had thus been able to give Bavaria first to members of the dynasty itself, and later to other Saxon nobles). But Hermann himself was count of Luxemburg and Salm, both situated in the extreme west of the realm, in Frankish territory, and the assembly choosing him was also held in Frankish territory, at Ochsenfurt in Franconia. On the other hand, the coronation this time was held in Saxony, at Goslar, since the unfortunate archbishop of Mainz had not yet been able to return to his see.

Another reason why the Saxons did not think of secession was that, more often than not, kingship in that period did not entail effective rule over people or territory. A king like Henry IV had authority within relatively clear geographical limits—for example he could not suddenly have appeared in Paris to claim royal authority there. But that

[208] Bruno, S*axonicum bellum* 118–21, 125, 129. The phrase about sowing discord probably alludes to Proverbs 6.19.

[209] *Principes Saxoniae cunctis gentibus Teutonicae linguae, non minus inimicis quam amicis, legatos miserunt, rogantes, ut Heinrico filioque eius excepto, quemlibet alium rectorem eligerent, se ei, quicumque esset, fideliter servituros pollicentes, quatenus omnia regni membra, sicut olim fuerant, in unum sub uno rege convenirent.* Bruno, *Saxonicum bellum* 130.

did not mean that all territory within the limits of his nominal dominions was equally under his control; indeed 'control' is quite the wrong term to use anyway. Within the realm, Henry was recognized as enjoying certain prerogatives, in particular the office of supreme judge, the right to request military service, and the right to grant privileges to individuals and corporations—though not to legislate in today's sense. Lesser magnates had the same prerogatives, though by comparison with the crown they exercised them within smaller lordships. With the exception of the right to appoint bishops and major abbots (which for that very reason was so important and increasingly disputed by the church after 1075), the king could wield power only locally, in the locality or region where he currently happened to be. He was not necessarily welcome. His subjects would appeal to him if they felt in need of help, but otherwise they may often have preferred him to stay away.

No doubt the arrival of the court often was not greeted with unmixed enthusiasm, even though usually the reaction of those concerned will not have been as outspoken as, allegedly, that of bishop Megingaud of Eichstätt (in office 991–1014/15). The anonymous author of a history of the Eichstätt see composed in about 1078 (known as the Anonymus Haserensis or Anonymous of Herrieden, after the monastery where he was a monk) reports a number of colourful stories about this bishop, who had clearly become a local legend. A friend of short services and long meals (*malebat missam brevem quam mensam*), Megingaud is quick to lose his temper and shower his interlocutors with swearwords like 'son of a whore [*filius meretricis*]', regardless of their rank; in wet weather he rides all the way to the threshold of the emperor's chamber ('what have I a horse for, if nevertheless I arrive at court covered in mud like a pedestrian?') and fails to get to his feet in the emperor's presence ('I am his relative and older than he, and honouring your elders is commanded by both holy writ and the writings of the heathen!'). Whatever the truth of those stories, they offer insights into the world of the author, who wrote at exactly the time of the civil strife caused by the conflict between Henry IV and the Saxons on the one hand, Henry IV and pope Gregory VII on the other. According to this text, the imperial relative in question (Henry II, reigns 1002–24) once instructed Megingaud to supply provisions to the court, which was passing through the area near Eichstätt. The demands of the emperor's messenger being 'such as to shock even an archbishop', Megingaud flies into a rage (*pessime! inquit, dominus tuus aperte insanit*—'you scoundrel!', he said, 'your master is evidently out of his mind!'), and, lamenting his own penury, accords only a token contribution to the needs of the court.[210]

Indeed, a main Saxon complaint was the near-continuous presence of the royal court at Goslar and other Saxon places.[211] After the Saxon rebellion flared up again in 1076, Henry never again visited Goslar and in fact never again exercised power in Saxony (his attempt to spend christmas 1080 at Goslar was foiled by a Saxon army).[212] The king now mostly stayed at Worms, Regensburg, and finally Mainz. During the decades when Henry was at odds with four successive anti-kings (Rudolf, Hermann, and then his two sons), both parties were totally dependent on which side the magnates of the realm, that is the prelates and leading nobles, but also the burgesses of major towns, chose to support.

[210] Anonymus Haserensis 15–24 (MGH SS 7; more recently Weinfurter 1987); my trans.

[211] Robinson (1999: 79–80); Lampert, *Annals* for the year 1073 (report of a meeting at Goslar between Henry and the Saxons); cf. ibid. passages in the entries for 1066, 1071, and 1075.

[212] Bruno, *Saxonicum bellum* 125.

Magnates had fighting men at their disposal, but the towns might protect the king within their walls, as did the burgesses of Worms and Mainz after forcing their respective bishops into exile. There was no institutionalized apparatus for wielding power that the king or the anti-kings just needed to take control of to be able to force unwilling subjects into submission. They disposed of troops only to the extent that they won the support of the magnates. For that, the question of their legitimacy was of decisive importance even if other factors might play a role, too. The fact that Henry successfully defended his crown without ever winning a major battle against any of the anti-kings suggests that the playing field was not level: as the 'original' king, not contested by anyone at his accession, Henry disposed of a decisive advantage.

Having crossed the Alps for the third time in 1090, Henry remained stuck in Italy until 1097 because his adversaries blocked the passes. But, precisely because western kingship at that time had little to do with effective personal power, even the fact that during those years he was practically powerless in Germany did not seriously endanger his recognition as king, or indeed emperor as he had by then become (having been crowned by the first of his anti-popes), by what seems to have been the majority of his subjects. The anti-kings might gain a following, and, because of his excommunication, contest that Henry was legitimate. But the church itself was divided. If, like the anti-kings, the anti-popes were unable to prevail against the 'original' incumbents, nevertheless pope Gregory and his radical reformist followers were far from commanding universal respect. The Herrieden Anonymous, himself a well-educated cleric, evidently did not like them. He compares Megingaud favourably to 'certain people' in the church of his own day (*nunc*, i.e. the 1070s). 'For he did nothing from falseness; but they strain at a gnat and swallow a camel'—an allusion to Matthew 23.23–4 ('Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees . . . ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel'). The Anonymous has pope Leo IX say to the future Gregory VII: 'If, as hopefully will not happen, you ever succeed to the apostolic see, you will throw the whole world into confusion [*totum mundum perturbabis*],' and adds: 'How true this prediction was has, alas, been shown only too clearly by our own tribulations [*in nostris calamitatibus*].'[213]

If, after the failure of his elder son Konrad, Henry's younger son Henry (V) eventually did win universal recognition as Henry's successor, that had much to do with his father's sudden death in 1106. Kingship was not essential for the organization and stability of society. A kingdom was more like a fenced-in pasture, where the grass grew of its own accord, than like a field which without the efforts of the crown would have lain fallow. In any case, as we shall see in Chapter 4, even the most centralized monarchy of the *ancien régime* never achieved real control over its subjects, not even in the eighteenth century. The crown did play a vital role by embodying what English and Scottish sources of the late pre-Reformation period like to call the *communitas regni*, the community of the realm (it is invoked for example by the declaration of Arbroath, as we saw earlier). We shall discuss this function of the crown, which was independent of its actual power, in detail in Chapter 4. But it should be clear from this section that supralocal political units of Latin christendom were not maintained by coercion (nor could they have been). Any political community, more especially any large political community, existed essentially by consent, by voluntary association (recall the insistence of the Arbroath declaration that Robert Bruce was king of Scots by virtue of the 'due agreement and consent of us

[213] Anonymus Haserensis 18, 37.

all'). The Saxons did not leave the *rîche*, the east Frankish realm, even though it would not have been difficult for them to do so—a separate kingdom of the Saxons would still have been among the biggest, territorially and demographically, of all christendom; nor did the 'counts' whose dominions made up the kingdom of France ever repudiate the French crown even though, in the eleventh century, it had little or no power over them. Conversely, subjugating a large community against its will was very difficult even for a powerful ruler, as the failure of the conquest of Scotland by the English king Edward I shows. If the appropriation of Ireland and Wales by the English crown was much more successful, it was because unlike Scotland those countries lacked a *communitas regni* (we shall return to this in Chapter 4).

3.4 Political thinking of the *respublica christiana*

3.4.1 The Roman empire lives on, 'albeit as a fiction'

From the viewpoint of the inhabitants of the late pre-christian and early christian Roman empire, the world was divided into Romans on the one hand, 'barbarians' on the other. In the eastern empire, this never changed: there were *Rhômaíoi*, and there were *bárbaroi*. The latter category comprised everybody who did not belong in the former. Thus, the twelfth-century historian Anna Komnênḗ numbers among the *bárbaroi* the 'Latins', *Latínoi*, the inhabitants of Latin christendom.[214] From a 'western' perspective, the antithesis between 'Romans' on the one hand, 'Latins' on the other seems paradoxical, and might give rise to the suspicion that 'Romans' in twelfth-century Constantinople had acquired some other meaning. Yet Anna (*Alexiad* 6.11) makes clear that, despite drastic territorial change that she even emphasizes, for her the 'empire of the Romans' ruled by her father Aléxios was the same empire that in an earlier age comprised the entire Mediterranean.

As we saw, the fact that Anna uses the term 'Latins' to describe collectively a bunch of distinct peoples is not at odds with the view those peoples had of themselves. They did consider themselves part of a single overarching community represented by the church. Eastern christianity, too, was perceived as a single community. Yet it was easy and, some would argue, for a long time quite understandable for the 'Romans' to feel that they were in a league of their own, as culturally superior as, for many centuries, they were politically. In the west, by contrast, the various peoples of Latin christendom by and large considered each other as equals despite a measure of rivalry or even enmity (the relationship of the four German peoples as handled by the *Annolied* furnishes a good illustration)—something which it would be quite wrong to take for granted, and a fundamental factor of the evolution of the kind of 'anarchical society' analysed by Hedley Bull as characteristic of the post-Reformation 'classical' 'states system' of Europe.

As Paul denies any difference between Jews and Greeks, so Latin christendom admitted no really important difference between Scots and Englishmen or Franks and Saxons. If not all men in Latin christendom were Trojans (though the majority were, in

[214] The evidence is assembled in Buckler 1929; see the index entries for 'Barbarians', in particular the subheadings 'attitude of Byzantines to' and 'Westerners so considered by A.C. [Anna Comnena]'. In her introduction, Buckler discusses the worldview of this east Roman author against the background of her time, and sympathizes with it (p. 5: 'Anna scorns as "barbarians" all other nations but her own; had she not good cause?').

their opinion), all of them certainly belonged to the church. That meant that in a way all were Romans, since the church was, too: it called itself *Romana ecclesia,* the church of Rome. We are so accustomed to this that we tend to overlook how odd it really is: what did Jesus have to do with Rome? Almost certainly he or his disciples knew no Latin (if they knew a 'foreign' language besides their native Aramaic, it would have been Greek), and none of the christian holy writings were originally composed in Latin. Yet, somewhat nonchalantly, the 'church of Rome' made Latin its sacred and exclusive language anyway. For mass its dignitaries still wear robes modelled on those worn at the Roman imperial court of the early christian period. And the culture of Latin christendom was first and foremost that of the church. At the risk of seeming banal, it is worth underlining that Latin christendom wrote and spoke Latin, the language of the church, even in perfectly humdrum everyday transactions that had nothing to do with the church.

Latin was of course the language of higher education, which after the turn of the millennium was less and less limited to theology and its ancillary fields. In terms of their organization, the universities of Latin christendom, which developed from the eleventh century onwards, were all similar, enabling students from many different parts of Europe to attend them and switch between them; tellingly, they bestowed on their alumni the *licentia ubique docendi*, 'permission to teach anywhere'.[215] But Latin was also the language of administration, including outside the church. Thus, in 1300, the town council of Eisenach wrote to its Lübeck counterpart to urge more rigorous quality controls in the herring trade. Lübeck merchants marketed great quantities of salted herring, sold in barrels that were liable to be opened for inspection. Unfortunately, the Eisenach councillors pointed out, the barrels often contained 'good and fresh herring at the ends of the barrels, but vile and putrid in the middle'. Even though authors and addressees of this complaint shared the same native tongue, it was made in Latin: *allecia . . . bona et recentia in extremitatibus tunnarum et in medio . . . vilia et putrida.*[216] Official correspondence within the Hansa was exclusively in Latin until 1369[217]—even though it only accepted German members.

In such circumstances, 'the notion that all belonged in some sense to a universal "Roman empire" remained strong even in the absence of a transnational secular government. . . . Germans, Englishmen, Frenchmen, Italians and others were able to do business together thanks partly to their shared *Romanitas*. Latin was a lingua franca; Roman law was "the common law" (*ius commune*).'[218] Underlying this was a phenomenon that had already struck the sixth-century historian Iordanes. In the preface of his *Roman History*, he declares that he wants to show 'how the Roman commonwealth arose, endured, conquered almost the entire world, and still endures to this day, albeit as a fiction'.[219] Of course, it is my argument in this study that in an important sense all political structures are fictitious; what Iordanes presumably means is that people continued to feel part of the

[215] Ubl (2000: 10).

[216] Quoted Friedland (1991: 69).

[217] Friedland (1991: 116–19); on the language of the Hansa, see also Dollinger (1989: 342).

[218] Black (1992: 88–9).

[219] *quomodo Romana res publica coepit et tenuit totumque pene mundum subegit et hactenus vel imaginarie teneat.* Iordanes, *Romana*, preface paragraph 2. The crucial question here is of course in what sense Iordanes employs the word *imaginarius*, as this is not entirely clear from the context. It is a rare word, so its normal meaning when Iordanes wrote is difficult to establish. However, the meaning 'fictitious' seems obvious from the context in Codex Theodosianus 11.1.2 (5th cent.).

'Roman commonwealth' although in much of the territory of the old empire the writ of the Roman rulers in Constantinople no longer ran. This continued to be true of the 'Roman empire' as conceived in Latin christendom. People felt somehow part of it even though no Roman rulers exercised actual power over them—a situation that might, of course, occur within any other (indubitably existing) kingdom, too, as with the eleventh-century Saxons in the German realm or the French 'counts'. After the turn of the millennium, the German rulers, considered the successors of Augustus and Constantine, were far from commanding unquestioning obedience even in the German realm, and never had much influence in any part of Europe of which, besides their 'Roman' dignity, they were not also king (which they were in Germany proper, in the kingdom of Burgundy, in northern Italy, for part of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in southern Italy and Sicily, and for part of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in Bohemia). Nevertheless, the Roman empire, perceived as a present reality, was the subject of much debate and indeed criticism in Latin christendom, which would have made no sense if the empire had been considered insignificant in any case. For thinkers of the period, as we shall see, its significance had little to do with the actual power of its rulers.

The western imperial dignity was re-established in 800, in 962, and in 1312. In a way, it was a non-starter every time, or at least quick to run into trouble. There seems to be a general idea that the 'medieval' empire was once powerful and then decayed slowly—still powerful enough to be fought in the Thirty Years War ended in 1648, after which it took another 150 years before finally coming to an end in 1806. But this is quite wrong. On closer examination, the empire turns out never to have been powerful at all, even though some of its rulers—like Charles I or Otto I—perhaps were. Then what did the empire mean to Latin christendom?

3.4.2 The empire in christian theology and eschatology

Once Constantine, in the fourth century, forged an alliance between the Roman secular power and the church, the church presented the empire as willed by god. The ideology of the christian Roman empire that was valid in almost unchanged form until the end of the pre-Reformation period emerged very quickly, found for example in the writings of bishop Eusébios of Kaisáreia (in Palestine; ∼260/65–339/40). In his great history of the church, which culminates in the reign of Constantine, or in his biography of Constantine, Eusébios assumed as it were the role of chief propagandist of the new age, and greatly influenced the early christian 'church fathers', both Greek and Latin. Eusébios was a follower of the gnostic philosopher Origénês (∼185–∼254):

> For Origen and his disciples, Christianity was the 'natural', the 'original' religion. The 'seeds' of Christian doctrine had been sown by Christ in every man. Ever since the Creation they had been variously tended by Him. Christ, therefore, had 'tended' the best in Greek culture—especially Greek philosophy and ethics—as deliberately as He had revealed the Law to the Jews; the foundation of the universal Christian Church by Christ had been expressly synchronized with the foundation of a universal Roman peace by Augustus. A Christian, therefore, could reject neither Greek culture nor the Roman empire without seeming to turn his back on part of the divinely ordained progress of the human race.[220]

[220] Brown (1999: 82–4).

Appended to his biography of Constantine (and merged into a single continuous text) are the speeches that Eusébios delivered on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary, in 335, of Constantine's accession and of the inauguration of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem by Constantine in 336. In those speeches Eusébios offered an ambitious apology of the new faith, which he sought to present as compatible with (non-christian) gnosticism and its cult of the *lógos*, the divine word or reason. What is of interest here is the way Eusébios integrates the Roman empire in his defence of the christian faith. Constantine had political motives for cultivating christianity, using the church as a weapon against his rivals and co-rulers, whom he eventually eliminated on the battlefield. Of course he expected a return, which men like Eusébios were eager to provide.

Eusébios establishes a parallel between polytheism, the worshipping of many gods (*polytheía*), and rule by many (*polyarchía*). For him, both were characteristic of the past age that did not yet know the true god and therefore erroneously worshipped mere lower 'spirits' (*daímones*) as gods—indeed christianity at that time did not deny that the traditional gods existed as supernatural beings, but considered them as inferior and malicious. Eusébios designates as 'rule by many' not only forms of collective decision-making within given political entities but also the division of mankind as a whole among a multitude of power-holders. While the former often led to civil strife, the latter led to war between political entities. For Eusébios, it was no accident that the unification of mankind in the Roman empire, the transition to rule by a single person within that empire, and the birth of Christ coincided in time. All three were part of the divine plan for mankind. Indeed, to hear Eusébios tell it, the coming of Christ and the foundation of the Roman monocracy by Augustus were of equal theological significance.

It is worth citing Eusébios at some length to document, besides the substantive content, the incantatory manner in which the bishop keeps reverting to the word 'one'. In doing so he anticipates the concept of *reductio* (or *ordinatio*) *ad unum*, the reduction (in the sense of: tracing back) of all things to one. According to this view, current in particular in the late pre-Reformation age of the scholastics, when the unity of Latin christendom already showed signs of breaking up, the diversity of the universe was a surface phenomenon, underlying which was a fundamental oneness that connected all things and which was discoverable by human inquiry. In what follows, the word 'One' is capitalized to indicate that in Eusébios' text it is always stressed—in Greek this is achieved simply by employing the numeral 'one', which did not double at the time as an indefinite article as it does now. In the opening passage of the speech for the inauguration of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Eusébios says:

> In the old days, all the peoples of the earth were separated from each other, and the human race in its entirety was cut up into lordships over provinces, peoples, and lands, some ruled by despots, some by the many [*eparchíai kai ethnarchíai kai toparchíai, tyrannídes te kai polyarchíai*]. Hence unceasing battles and warfare, devastations and enslavements in the country and in the towns, that never left them in peace. . . .
>
> One would not go wrong in attributing the causes of this to the error of worshipping many gods [*polýtheos plánê*]. But when the instrument of salvation, that is, the most holy body of Christ proved more powerful than any spirits worshipped mistakenly, more powerful than the malevolence of those bent on mischief in word and deed; when it had been raised as a trophy

of victory over the spirits, a trophy turning the ancient evils to flight: at that moment all the works of the spirits at once came to nothing.

(In the pre-christian Greek world, it was customary for the winning side in a battle to put up a *trópaion* or sign of victory. Originally, a *trópaion*—'trophy'—consisted of booty, such as armour or weaponry taken from the enemy; it was hung for example from a tree, and thus 'raised'. The word is derived from the verb *trópô* 'to turn', as the *trópaion* originally marked the spot where the enemy turned to flee. Eusébios plays on the meaning and etymology of the word. The 'most holy body of Christ' was 'raised' on the cross; during the eucharist, the host, which is also 'the body of Christ', is likewise 'raised', held aloft by the priest at the moment of its consecration.)

From then on, there were no more local lordships or rule by the many, no more despots or rule by the people [*toparchíai kai polyarchíai, tyrannídes te kai dêmokratíai*], and the devastations and sieges that they brought over towns and over the countryside ceased: instead, One god was preached to all. At the same time, One kingdom [*basileía*] arose for the benefit of all, that of the Romans, and the age-old, unquenchable, irreconcilable enmity of the peoples was lifted without delay. For once knowledge [*gnôsis*] of the One god was given to all men, and One manner of worship [*trópos heis eusebeías*], that is, the saving teaching of Christ, and, accordingly and at one and the same time, One kingship [*basileíon*] came into being for the Roman empire in its entirety [*kath'hólês tês Rhômaíôn archês*], profound peace seized the whole world. Together, in One decisive moment [*kairós*], as if by One divine nod, two seeds of goodness rose up for mankind, the Roman empire and the holy teaching.

... the Roman empire, presenting itself from that time onwards as the rule of one man [*hê Rhômaíôn archê mónarchos ex ekeínou phantheísa*], and the teaching of Christ—as two great powers advancing from One starting point [*hósper apó nýssês miás dýo megálai proelthoúsai dynámeis*]—tamed [or: 'civilized'] the whole world and united it in friendship [*hápanta hêmérôsán te kai eis philían synêgagon*]... For the power [*dýnamis*] of our saviour put an end to the manifold lordships of the spirits and the worship of many gods [*tas tôn daimónôn polyarchías te kai polytheías katheíle*], preaching One kingdom of god for all men, Greeks and barbarians and all men within the confines of the earth. Meanwhile, the Roman empire, now that the causes of manifold rule [*polyarchíai*] had been removed, brought the visible lordships under its sway. Striving to bring the whole race together in One unity and harmony [*eis mían hénôsin kai symphônían to pan génos synáptein speúdousa*], it has already united most of the various peoples, and is destined to unite the rest, reaching the very edges of the inhabited world [*oikouménê*]. For with divine power the teaching that saves removes all obstacles from its path and paves the way for it....

(Put differently: the coming of Christ has broken the power of the 'spirits', the old plural deities, seen as responsible for the division of mankind since different peoples had different deities. Eusébios implicitly distinguishes 'invisible' lordships of the spirits and corresponding 'visible' lordships of men. With the power of the spirits broken, the 'visible' lordships can no longer resist the expansion of the Roman empire, since it has the backing of the true god, who is stronger than the spirits.)

For simultaneously the error of [having faith in] the spirits was refuted, simultaneously the ancient enmity and battle of the peoples was extinguished, and simultaneously, again, One god

and One knowledge [*gnôsis*] of god was preached to all; simultaneously One kingdom gained power over mankind, and the whole human race was joined together in peace and friendship, all men recognizing one another as brothers, and realizing that they are relatives [*tên oikeían phýsin egnórizon*]. At once, therefore, they greeted and received one another peacefully as children born of One father, the One god, and of One mother, the true worship [*eusébeia*]. Henceforth, thus, the whole inhabited world was like One well-ordered household and family [*oikía kai syngeneía*].[221]

Subsequently, many Latin authors express themselves in similar fashion. Thus, in the early fifth century, Paulus Orosius—a native of what is now Portugal, but later based in north Africa—wrote a history of the world from a christian viewpoint (*Historiae adversus paganos*); it was widely read in Latin christendom and even translated into Old English (as well as Arabic). Full of patriotic enthusiasm, Orosius exalts the empire and, of importance not just for his own time but equally for the tenth or fifteenth century, the emperor as a manifestation of the divine will.

Once, when wars shook the entire world, all countries had their own kings, their own laws, and their own customs, and given the many powers going their opposite ways there were no ties of friendship. Who after all could have established such ties between isolated and barbarous peoples, which, taught opposing holy rites, were separated also by their religion?[222]

Orosius is in agreement with Eusébios that the rule of one man established by Augustus marked the point when things took a turn for the better, in the form, concretely, of general peace. The incarnation of Christ at this very time was proof that the Roman monocracy enjoyed divine backing.

So, in the year 752 since the founding of the city [of Rome, i.e. in the year 1 BCE], when Caesar Augustus had brought all the peoples together in a single peace . . . he closed the gates of Ianus [a symbol that Rome was not at war]. . . . At that very time, that is, in the same year when, by god's will, Caesar [Augustus] brought a truly stable and genuine peace, Christ was born, whose coming this peace served . . . Also in that same year in which God deigned to show himself as a man and be a man, this same Caesar [Augustus], whom god had predestined for such great and mysterious things, for the first time ordered a census to be taken in all the provinces and to register all men. At this time, then, Christ was born, and registered in the Roman census as soon as he was born [*Tunc igitur natus est Christus, Romano censui statim adscriptus ut natus est*]. This is that first and most illustrious testimony that Caesar is the ruler of all and the Romans are lords of the world [*Haec est prima illa clarissimaque professio quae Caesarem omnium principem Romanosque rerum dominos . . . signavit*], that the order went out for every man to be registered and he who created all men wished to be found a man and registered as a man. . . . Clearly, then, everybody will readily understand and see in his faith that our lord Jesus Christ, who caused this city [*urbs*: Rome] to grow and protected it from enemies, brought it to this summit. To this city he wished most of all to belong at his coming, and by all means to be called a Roman citizen by the testimony of the Roman census.[223]

[221] Eusébios, *Trikontaêterikós* 16. I have used the edn. by Friedrich Adolf Heinichen (Leipzig: Nauck 1830), whose emendations I follow.

[222] *Olim cum bella toto orbe fervebant, quaeque provincia suis regibus suis legibus suisque moribus utebatur, nec erat societas adfectionum ubi dissidebat diversitas potestatum; postremo solutas et barbaras gentes quid tandem ad societatem adduceret, quas diversis sacrorum ritibus institutas etiam religio separabat?* Paulus Orosius 5.1.10–14.

[223] Paulus Orosius 6.22.1–8.

The passage of course alludes to the gospel of Luke: 'And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed ["registered" would be a more appropriate translation].'[224] We know nothing about this measure from any other source. If any such initiative really took place, it may for example have been limited to the province of Syría or the wider region. However, Luke really presents it as aiming at 'the entire world' (*pása hê oikouménê*; *totus orbis* in the Latin Vulgate). Orosius is thus merely following a biblical text, whose truth he could not question. But he goes beyond the source in assuming, as he apparently did, that even at that time someone like Joseph of Nazareth would have been a Roman citizen, a craftsman in a small Palestinian town of which he was probably not even a native since he registered in Bethlehem. Another two centuries were to pass before Roman citizenship was granted to all free men in the empire. The expression *census* for the measure is likewise introduced by Orosius; it is not found in the Vulgate. Any such measure would presumably have aimed to register taxpayers rather than those holding Roman citizenship. Yet anachronistic though it is, the notion to which Orosius gives expression, that Christ wished to be a Roman citizen and thereby honoured the Roman empire, subsequently came to be widely accepted.

Orosius' patron Aurelius Augustinus (Saint Augustine) took a more detached and ambivalent view of the empire, but even he—an immense intellectual influence on western civilization for a millennium to come—said enough positive things about the empire to confirm Latin christendom in its generally highly positive attitude towards it. Even for Augustine, the Roman empire was willed by god: 'It pleased god to conquer the world through her [Rome] and, having transformed it into a single political and legal fellowship, to pacify it far and wide.'[225] And Augustine, too, notes that 'when Herod was king in Judea, and, after the change of constitution, Caesar Augustus was in power among the Romans and had pacified the world, Christ was born.'[226] A generation later, in a well-known sermon ('On the birthday of the apostles Peter and Paul'),[227] pope Leo I (in office 440–61) took up the idea that the uniting of the various kingdoms and peoples in the Roman empire was the work of divine providence, so as to ready the world for the coming of Christ and ensure that its effect would be worldwide (*ut autem huius inenarrabilis gratiae per totum mundum diffunderetur effectus, Romanorum regnum divina providentia praeparavit*). Created by force, the empire was nevertheless legitimate because it brought the universal community of peoples (*gentium universitas*) that was crucial for god's plan for mankind. Leo calls the empire a *regnum*, a 'kingdom' or 'kingship', but also claims it to be in accordance with the will of god that '[the] many kingdoms should be federated into one empire [*ut multa regna uno confoederarentur imperio*].'

Leo uses this idea not only to justify the Roman empire as such, but also the central role of the city of Rome in the church, which theologically was not at all self-evident. He argues that Peter, the most senior of the apostles, necessarily had to turn to Rome to be able to exercise a maximum of influence. Mixing the metaphor of a beacon with that of the human body, Leo plays on the well-established notion that Rome was the 'head'

[224] Luke 2.1.

[225] *per quam Deo placuit orbem debellare terrarum et in unam societatem rei publicae legumque perductum longe lateque pacare.* Aurelius Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* 18.22.

[226] *regnante ergo Herode in Iudaea, apud Romanos autem iam mutato rei publicae statu imperante Caesare Augusto et per eum orbe pacato natus est Christus.* Aurelius Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* 18.46.

[227] Leo Papa, *In natali apostolorum Petri et Pauli* (sermon no. 82, Migne PL 54, 422–7).

(*caput*) or capital of the world: the apostle came there 'in order that the light of truth might the more effectively shine forth throughout the body of the world from its head [*ut lux veritatis . . . efficacius se ab ipso capite per totum mundi corpus effunderet*].' Peter had of course by then come to be regarded as the first pope. Indeed, according to Leo it was Peter—and Paul, who also ended his career in Rome—who really made Rome the head or capital of the world, since thanks to them its spiritual influence now reached further than the dominion that the city had founded on conquest.[228] By constant repetition in the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries, the formula *Roma caput mundi* (or *orbis*) became so hackneyed that it was often varied; Leo introduces an element of originality in separating the primacy of Rome from the fate of the empire.[229]

For Eusébios, it was still the secular empire as manifested in Constantine that was to progress to the ends of the earth. In Leo's Rome, the ruler in Ravenna was weak, the puppet of warlords often of foreign (German) extraction, and such warlords were powerful even in Constantinople. Other peoples now advanced on Rome (and Constantinople), not it on them—the Vandals sacked the 'eternal city' during Leo's pontificate (in 455), rendering their name synonymous with wanton destruction. Indeed, however, those other peoples were keen to assimilate themselves in cultural terms and adopted the christian faith (if not necessarily the brand favoured by the 'official' church, arianism being strong among them, but the church kept working on that). In such circumstances, it was a good idea to downplay the secular empire in favour of 'Roman' spiritual rule, the more so as the papacy could hope to benefit from such a move. It was not prepared to give any ground in terms of primacy, no more than the senatorial elite in Italy had accepted the new prominence of Constantinople: Leo vigorously defended the leading role of Rome in the universal church at the council of Chalkêdṓn (across from Constantinople on the Bósporos) of 451.

If Peter and Paul had been drawn to Rome in the first century, with the empire at its zenith and Byzántion a provincial place that few people took much notice of, that was not surprising; had they lived in the fifth century, they would probably have ended up in Constantinople. But, suffused by a strong irrationalism, a strong belief in higher powers and their presumptive symbols and messages, the age did not think that way. Rome had the tombs of Peter and Paul; Constantinople only the alleged remains of Peter's brother, Andrew (part of which was later brought to Scotland). Clearly, Rome had been chosen by god as the capital of the church, as it had been the capital of the empire of old, the 'real' empire that was now a nostalgic memory. But even if the secular power tottered, the church remained as the steward of the community of all peoples—which the Roman empire had been necessary to bring about but for running which it was no longer indispensable, with the church now in place. In a sense the empire had become

[228] *Isti* [Peter and Paul] *sunt qui te* [Rome] *ad hanc gloriam provexerunt, ut . . . per sacram beati Petri sedem caput orbis effecta, latius praesideres religione divina quam dominatione terrena. Quamvis enim multis aucta victoriis ius imperii tui terra marique protuleris, minus tamen est quod tibi bellicus labor subdidit quam quod pax Christiana subiecit.*

[229] Occurrences and variations of this theme in the discourse of the 4th–6th cent. include Rutilius Namatianus, *De reditu suo* 194 (*caput orbis*); Sidonius Apollinaris, *Panegyricus Anthemio* (*Carmina* 1) 438 (*caput mundi*), *Epistulae* 1.62 (*vertex mundi*); Cassiodorus, *Variae* 9.17 (*mundi caput*), 9.22 and 10.32 (*rerum caput*); Codex Iustinianus 12.3.3.1 (*caput orbis terrarum*); Iordanes, *Getica* 291 (*urbs illa caput orbis et domina*); in the same vein Ausonius 285 (*prima urbes inter . . . aurea Roma*), 298.39 (*patrias . . . Roma superveniet omnes*).

redundant—which at the same time meant that Constantinople did not really count, either, for all that it was still a bit more formidable than the western empire. Leo does not spell out that the church had actually supplanted the empire—he could not because the empire still existed; but later, when it was all but gone, the inference was natural and indeed drawn, on the basis of Leo's text, by Thomas Aquinas (see below).

If, as was common in the fourth and fifth centuries, the unification of the peoples by means of the Roman empire was regarded as the divinely willed preparatory stage and precondition for the coming of Christ, then it marked a climactic point in history—as which indeed Eusébios presents it, even if he still expected the expansion of the Roman empire to continue. By contrast, in the view of history common in later Latin christendom, the empire of Augustus, honoured by the birth of Christ, appeared as the summit, with things going generally downhill ever since. Paul in his letter to the Galatians (4.4) calls the moment when Christ became man the 'fullness of time' (*plenitudo temporis* in the Vulgate), an expression frequently taken up in the discourse of Latin christendom. On this view, any regression from the moment of perfect unity of the 'fullness of time' meant that mankind had slithered further downhill from the summit, a process whose completion would be marked by the antithesis of the coming of Christ, that is, the coming of the antichrist, the devil incarnate. This, it was believed, would be the prelude to the end of the world and the attendant horrors described in the Apocalypse of Saint John; to be followed by the Second Coming of Christ and the Last Judgement.

This of course posed the nagging question how far gone the world already was and whether the antichrist was not perhaps imminent or already there. It is clear that the writers of Latin christendom generally remained rather attached to the world and were not in a hurry to see it perish. Instead, they clung to anything that, despite all visible decay, seemed to indicate that the end of the world was *not* nigh. Two biblical texts were routinely cited in this context. One is the vision of the prophet Daniel (Daniel 7), which in its present version dates from the second century BCE and according to which four great empires would succeed each other in the course of world history. The vision was taken to refer to the empire of the Assyrians and Babylonians, the Persian empire, the 'Greek' empire of Alexander and his successors, and the Roman empire; this last empire according to the vision would not perish until the world did, too.[230]

Second, attention focused on remarks by the apostle Paul in the Second Letter to the Thessalonians (2.1–8):

> Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God . . . And now ye know what withholdeth [*nyn to katéchon oídate*: 'And ye know what withholdeth now' would be equally possible] that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let [the last seven words render the three Greek words *ho katéchôn árti*; 'to let' used here in the sense of 'to hinder'], until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed; whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.

[230] On Daniel and his later commentators, see above all Goez (1958: ch. 19 and *passim*).

This passage is cryptic in the extreme. In the part omitted above, Paul reminds the Thessalonians that he told them all this when he visited them; for some reason he seems to have been reluctant to repeat it in more open language in his letter, as if it were information that should not fall into the wrong hands. The problem tends to be compounded in translation. Without a rough idea of what is being said it is hard to pin down the exact meaning of some of the Greek words or their relation to each other, since that often depends on the context. Greek dictionaries will list literally dozens of possible meanings of the verb *katéchô*, crucial for understanding the passage. The authors of the King James Bible first render *katéchô* as 'to withhold' and then as 'to let', which in Elizabethan English were more or less synonymous. On the whole the 1611 text is clearly trying to be as literal as possible, for example in not supplying conjectural implied pronouns. Some more recent English translators go much further in interpreting the text to make it intelligible, but this of course tends to disguise the real semantic difficulties of the original.

In the early fifth century, Augustine, an old hand at solving biblical conundrums in often rather fanciful manner, quotes the passage and observes that evidently it alludes to the antichrist. But the phrase 'For the mystery of iniquity etc.', he declares to be beyond his comprehension: 'I confess that I have no idea what he [Paul] is saying.' Augustine does offer interpretations of the passage by others that he has heard or read, in particular the view, also put forward by Jerome in his commentary on Daniel, that Paul is referring to Daniel and that his message is that the antichrist will not come while the Roman empire is still in existence.

> For some think that the reference here is to the Roman empire [*imperium*], and that the apostle Paul did not wish to write openly lest he be blamed for being ill-disposed towards the empire, which it was hoped would last forever. With the words 'For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work' he would then have alluded to Nero.

This latter notion seems far-fetched to Augustine. However, he explicitly concedes that the barrier delaying the antichrist and to which the formulations containing the verb *katéchô* refer is indeed the Roman empire.[231]

Not least given Augustine's enormous popularity and authority, that notion lodged itself firmly in the collective mind of Latin christendom. To be sure, the people of Latin christendom did not normally read the bible in the Latin version quoted by Augustine—the so-called *Vetus Latina* or Old Latin Version, in fact not a unitary or complete text itself but a collective label for all the fragments of the bible quoted in extant early christian Latin writings. Augustine's contemporary Jerome provided a new translation, now known as the Vulgate, which subsequently became authoritative. However, although Jerome produced a completely new translation of the Old Testament, which unlike the *Vetus Latina* was based on the Hebrew original rather than its Greek translation, the Septuagint, for the New Testament he based himself on the work of earlier Latin translators. Probably for that reason his version of 2 Thessalonians 2, although not identical with Augustine's text, does render the key verb *katéchô* in the same manner, by Latin *detineo* 'to restrain, hold back' in the first occurrence and *teneo* 'to hold' in the second. The Vulgate, like Augustine's text, thus renders *nyn to katéchon* as *nunc quid detineat* 'that which holds back/restrains now' and *ho katéchôn árti* as *qui tenet nunc*,

[231] Aurelius Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* 20.19.

'he who holds now'. The former was generally taken as alluding to the Roman empire, the second as alluding to the Roman emperor. The 'falling away' or 'rebellion' (*discessio* in the Vulgate, for Greek *apostasía*) was taken to mean secession from the Roman empire, its dissolution.

A twofold inference was then drawn from this passage: on the one hand, that the Roman empire must not be allowed to perish, in order to prevent the world from coming to an end; and, on the other hand, that the empire could not possibly have perished already, since the antichrist was not there yet. We saw how, in the east, the fact that after the fall of Constantinople the end of the world failed to take place when according to patriarch Gennádios it should have done led to the notion that Moscow must now be the 'new Rome'—another illustration, incidentally, also of the fact that continuity for pre-Reformation christendom, Latin or Greek, meant institutional not spatial (territorial) continuity, so the western emperor no more had to reside in Rome than the new eastern secular protector of the church had to reside in Constantinople. (The pope did not have to reside in Rome, either: when he established himself at Avignon instead—quite voluntarily, contrary to a common misperception—this was less strange for people at the time than it might appear nowadays.)

Between 949 and 954—at a time, that is, when since the death of the last incumbent in 924 for a long time no one had borne the western imperial title—abbot Adso of Montier-en-Der composed a short treatise on the antichrist, which later was widely read. He shares the view that the 'falling away' that must come before the arrival of the antichrist is the dissolution of the Roman empire. But according to Adso the empire still existed. To be sure, it was for the most part destroyed, *ex maxima parte destructum.* But the 'kings of the Franks, who must hold the Roman imperial dignity', were still there—*reges Francorum, qui Romanum imperium tenere debent*: the verb *tenere* echoes the *qui tenet nunc* of the Vulgate. (Adso ignores the fact that the imperial dignity had in fact last been held by the rulers of northern Italy.) Adso dedicated his little book to queen Gerberga: the east Frankish king Otto I was her brother, the west Frankish king Louis IV her husband. Otto was to re-establish the western imperial title for himself and his successors in 962, but Adso could hardly foresee that when he wrote. For him, the Frankish realm or kingship (*regnum Francorum*) as such was the christian empire or imperial dignity (*imperium christianum*), an idea propagated notably by the adviser of king Charles I (Charlemagne), the English cleric Alcuin. Even before 800, and still more so afterwards, *imperium Romanum* and *imperium christianum* were often used synonymously. Adso himself speaks of the *Romanorum christianorumque imperium*, 'the empire of the Romans and christians'—just as patriarch Antony, in the 1390s, calls Manuel II Palaiológos emperor 'of the Romans, that is to say of all christians'.[232]

There has been some debate whether the expression *reges Francorum* 'kings of the Franks' used by Adso refers only to the west Frankish ('French') kings, or to the east Frankish ('German') kings as well.[233] What is clear either way is that Adso has a different attitude to this kind of question than would nowadays be considered normal. Thus, he clearly does not regard the Roman empire as a territorial unit: the fact that he

[232] Adso of Montier-en-Der, *De ortu et tempore antichristi* (1898: quotations at p. 110). On the wide circulation of the work see the introductory remarks by the editor, Ernst Sackur, ibid. pp. 97ff. See also van den Baar (1956: 27–8); Goez (1958: 74–6). On Alcuin and the *imperium christianum*, see e.g. Beumann (1972: 201–4); Classen (1985: 49); Ewig (1954: 65, 69).

[233] On this debate see Schneidmüller (1977/78).

paraphrases *discessio* as meaning that *kingdoms* must secede from the empire[234] makes it clear that he conceives of it as some kind of suzerainty, or perhaps just superiority of rank, which moreover he describes as a *dignitas*, a dignity. For that reason I have translated his usage of *Romanum imperium* as 'the Roman imperial dignity'. It seems that Adso understands the word *imperium* as denoting primarily a function (originally, in the Roman army, that of being in command) rather than the territory where it is exercised. Indeed, etymologically, *imperium* had the former meaning before it acquired the latter; similarly *regnum* can mean both 'kingship' and 'kingdom'.

If Adso means only the west Frankish kings, then it does not matter to him that at the time when he wrote they had very little power. If he means the east Frankish kings, far more powerful at the time, as well, then that would be in conformity with the theory of the four empires: here, the 'Greek' empire established by Alexander's victory over the Persian ruler was united only briefly (a decade, to be exact) before breaking apart like the Frankish realm after Charles I; yet this 'Greek' empire was considered the bridge between the Persian and Roman empires. In an interesting parallel, Gregory of Tours in his late sixth-century *History of the Franks* likewise treats the *regnum Francorum* as a unit even though in his day it was divided among plural kings.[235] In Latin christendom, single lordships (like the east Frankish realm) might contain plural political communities, while conversely political communities (beginning with christendom itself) might span, or sit astride, plural lordships. This must be part of the reason why Adso did not think it necessary to clarify his argument. No matter who exactly (or how many) held power in it and who exactly belonged to it, the Frankish realm was the christian empire and that in turn was the Roman empire, and so for the time being one was safe from the antichrist.

Answering the question which kings Adso meant is made more difficult by the fact that it is not clear what precisely the tenth-century east Frankish kings saw themselves as. They were actually Saxon, but their royal title was exclusively due to the fact that they reigned over part of the old Frankish realm. Henry II (reigns 1002–24), the last Saxon on the east Frankish throne for a century, still had his seal inscribed with the traditional formula *renovatio regni Francorum* 'renewal of the Frankish realm'. Yet in their official documents, the tenth- and eleventh-century east Frankish kings all simply style themselves *rex* 'king' without any addition; or, after their imperial coronation, *imperator augustus* (since the late tenth century *Romanorum imperator augustus*). This was despite the fact that, from 1024 to 1125, those kings once more were Franks. Once crowned emperor, tenth- and eleventh-century east Frankish kings dropped the title *rex*, unlike Charles I, who continued to style himself 'king of the Franks and Lombards' after his imperial coronation and in addition to his imperial title. It is as if tenth- and eleventh-century east Frankish kings avoided any reference to the Franks in their title, but did not know what else to call themselves; this may even have been an added incentive for Otto I once more to adopt the lapsed imperial title in 962. In the twelfth century, the simple title *rex* was replaced by *rex Romanorum* 'king of (the) Romans' until the imperial coronation (Tudor documents in English have 'king of Romans' without the article, as

[234] *dicit Paulus apostolus, Antichristum non antea in mundum esse venturum, nisi venerit discessio primum, id est, nisi prius discesserint omnia regna a Romano imperio, quae pridem subdita erant* (Adso 1898: 110).

[235] Cf. Halsall (2003: 17).

in 'king of Scots'; from here on I follow this usage). It seems that the first to call himself 'king of Romans' was Henry III after becoming king (but not yet emperor) in 1039.[236] But the first to adopt the title systematically was Lothar III (a Saxon once again; reigns 1125–37). In his early charters, he is described only as *rex*, like his predecessors, but in later documents always as *rex Romanorum*.[237]

It is worth emphasizing that it was possible to call oneself 'king' and nothing else for 200 years, in other words that it was not considered necessary to indicate the community or territory over which one was king—just as the *Annolied* simply says 'the realm [*daz rîche*]' without any addition. As shown by the royal seal of Henry II, the east Frankish rulers continued to regard themselves as in some sense Frankish. But unlike the west Frankish rulers, they were reluctant expressly to call themselves that. From 919 to 1024, they were Saxon; but they could not call themselves *rex Saxonum* since their kingship as such was Frankish, and comprised more than just the Saxon duchy. Similarly, although their successors from 1024 to 1125 were Franks, they could not very well call themselves 'king of the Franks', either: that might have been seen as undermining their claim to rule over the other German peoples as well, now that the German realm had so clearly become a voluntary federation of peoples and especially given the difficult relationship between the Frankish-held crown and the Saxon nobility. But if not *rex Francorum*, then what? *rex Teutonicorum* seems not to have been an option, since *Teutonici* primarily referred to speakers of a language; presumably one could not be king of a language. Better then just to call oneself 'king' pure and simple, which amounted to not saying that one was *not* 'king of the Franks'.

Best of all of course was the title 'emperor', since that was not just Frankish, and, anyway, even more prestigious than the Frankish crown. But the emperor was emperor 'of the Romans': why not use that for the east Frankish king as well, since from the late tenth century onwards that king was automatically emperor-designate? As we saw earlier, the Capetians, who succeeded in monopolizing the west Frankish throne from 987 onwards, laid particular stress on the myth of Trojan origin of the Franks because they suffered from the handicap of not being Carolingians, and could be portrayed by their adversaries as 'usurpers' or at least the 'wrong' dynasty. Given the prestige that in Latin christendom adhered to ancientness and ancestry, claiming Priam of Troy as their direct forebear made the Capetians as respectable, and as Frankish, as anyone could possibly be. This kind of subtle propaganda was directed against the Carolingians and their descendants, but (although this was probably not intended) also hit the east Frankish rulers, who not only were no Carolingians, either, but not necessarily even Franks—it is perhaps no accident that it was the Saxon Lothar who first adopted the title *rex Romanorum* permanently. The Roman imperial dignity offered an alternative legitimation of east Frankish kingship that was at least as prestigious and valid as any assertion of Trojan descent. Another benefit of the Roman title was that it avoided any partisanship in the rivalry of the German peoples: it put none of them at a disadvantage and indeed in a sense honoured them all, a concern clearly already held by the eleventh-century author of the *Annolied*.

[236] Folz (1953: 82). According to LdM 'Rex Romanorum', the title was already employed by Henry II in a charter of 1007 and another of 1017 (at which time he had already been crowned emperor); see ibid. on the more extensive use made of this title by Henry III.

[237] For the evolution of the title, see the documents of the kings in question in the two series *Constitutiones* and *Diplomata* of the MGH.

At the death of the last Hohenstaufen emperor Frederic II in 1250, the imperial dignity lapsed once more. Given its bitter conflict with the late emperor Frederic, the papacy was in no hurry to put another emperor in his place. In Germany, the crown became an object of ongoing dispute among powerful factions, which at the same time profited from its weakness. Unlike the German crown, the papacy was powerful, and in all Latin christendom at that. Why was an emperor needed at all? He was in no position to control the whole of christendom the way the pope did, but *was* capable of being a nuisance for the latter. Was the pope not enough of a head for christendom?

Already the eighth-century fake 'donation of Constantine' claimed the imperial prerogatives in the western empire for the pope. From the eleventh century onwards, after the battle between pope and emperor had been joined in earnest for the first time by pope Gregory VII, the papacy put on increasingly 'imperial' airs. Thus, the college of cardinals, created in the eleventh century, was given the name *curia* in imitation of the old Roman senate. At his enthronement, the pope received imperial insignia.[238] This trend reached a climax in Boniface VIII,[239] who in the bull *Unam sanctam* of 1302 proclaimed the subordination of all secular power to that of the pope. The early fourteenth-century chronicler Francesco Pepino describes the audience at which ambassadors of the newly elected king of Romans, Albert of Habsburg, in 1298 inform pope Boniface of Albert's desire to be crowned emperor. But Boniface declares Albert's election to be invalid and Albert himself to be unworthy of the imperial office. Seated on his throne, clad in armour, and wearing a sword and a diadem which according to Francesco was that of the first christian emperor Constantine, the pope tells the ambassadors 'it is I who am Caesar; it is I who am emperor' (*Et sedens in solio armatus et cinctus ensem, habensque in capite Constantini diadema . . . ait: . . . Ego sum Caesar: ego sum Imperator*). One may be sceptical whether the pope actually used those words. Nevertheless the story illustrates how he was perceived at the time.[240]

No less an authority than Thomas Aquinas (∼1225–1274), whose mature period falls in the decades following the death of Frederic II and the ensuing absence of any emperor, in his commentary on 2 Thessalonians concluded that indeed the church was now the Roman empire. How, he asks,

> can it be that the peoples have long since seceded from the Roman empire [*Romanum imperium*], and yet the antichrist has not come? The answer is that the Roman empire has not yet come to an end, but has been transformed from a secular empire into a spiritual one [*commutatum de temporali in spirituale*], as pope Leo says in his sermon on the apostles. And so the answer is that the falling away from the Roman empire is to be understood as referring not just to the temporal empire, but to the spiritual one, that is to say the catholic [*catholica*, i.e., all-encompassing] faith [or: fealty, *fides*] of the Roman church.[241]

[238] Folz (1953: ch. 7), with more examples.

[239] Folz (1953: 152–5).

[240] Francesco Pepino, *Chronicon* 47 (1726: 745). Another, roughly contemporary account of the same audience is given by Ferreto of Vicenza (Ferreto de' Ferreti). Here the pope uses different words; but here, too, he wears a sword and a 'dread diadem [*diadema torvum*]' (Ferreto, *Historia* bk. 2 near the end; 1726: 994–5). On papal headwear and its imperial connotations cf. Folz loc.cit.

[241] Thomas Aquinas, *Super Ad Thessalonicos II* (in *Opera omnia*, edited by Roberto Busa, vol. 6). It is not certain if this text is by Thomas himself, or whether it is based e.g. on lecture notes.

The sermon by pope Leo (I) to which Thomas alludes is the one quoted earlier. Thomas presumably cites it from memory, since his own position goes rather beyond what Leo says: as we saw, the pope did not claim that the church had become the Roman empire, only that it had outclassed it. Other, less clerically minded authors did not share Thomas' rather radical position and were not ready to accept the end of the secular empire so fast. Thus, Thomas' contemporary Jordanus of Osnabrück, in his widely read defence of the Roman empire and its transfer to the *Germani* written in the third quarter of the thirteenth century, considers the realm of the *Germani* to be the current manifestation of the empire—evidently regardless of whether the 'king of Romans' had received the imperial coronation. Jordanus passionately urges both the lords and prelates of the *Germani* and the papacy not to hasten the disintegration of this realm, since that would also hasten the coming of the antichrist.[242]

3.4.3 The political organization of christendom in the thinking of the scholastics

During the lifetime of Thomas and Jordanus, the European universities, increasingly numerous, became a main forum for political debate and indeed developed political influence of their own. The age of the 'scholastics' or 'schoolmen'—the teachers in the schools that preceded the universities properly so called, and later in the universities themselves—developed its own, characteristic method of inquiry. It consisted in dialectically opposing theses and antitheses (*dicta pro et contra*) on a given question and trying to reach a conclusion with the help of recognized authorities on the one hand, logical reasoning on the other. Besides the bible and the writings of the 'church fathers' (chief among them Aurelius Augustinus), the most important of the authorities, especially for political thinking, came to be Aristotle. Once his main political works had been rediscovered and translated into Latin (the *Nikomachean Ethics* by chancellor Robert Grosseteste of Oxford university in the 1240s, though the version that came into general use is the result of an anonymous revision of Robert's text; and the *Politiká* in the 1260s by William of Moerbeke), they gained enormous popularity and influence throughout Latin christendom in a very short time.[243]

A major reason for the fascination with Aristotle was that he was unaffected by christian thinking and offered a brand of political theory that was entirely independent of the otherwise all-pervasive teachings of the church. Unsurprisingly, some in the church at first sought to stop the spreading of his ideas; it was Thomas Aquinas who undertook to demonstrate that those ideas were compatible with christian doctrine and thereby contributed greatly to their toleration. Of course the new ideas were applied to the major political issues and puzzles of the period. In the second half of the thirteenth century, there no longer was an emperor, whereas the power of the French crown made it more imposing than any recent emperor had been. At the same time, the papal claim to suzerainty over christendom was put forward more stridently than ever, though the resulting tension mostly affected the relationship between the pope on the one hand and the French and German rulers on the other and could more or less be ignored by the remaining rulers.

[242] Jordanus of Osnabrück, *Tractatus super Romano imperio* (MGH DM 4). On the popularity of this work, see the introduction by Herbert Grundmann and Hermann Heimpel, p. 9.

[243] See e.g. Canning (1996: 125–8); Scholz (1903: 26–8).

As long as there usually was an emperor (current or awaiting his coronation) in Latin christendom, the empire had been taken for granted and, although ill-defined, had not been an object of much debate. This began to change once the imperial dignity was in abeyance, and as a direct result of that fact: now that the empire could no longer be taken for granted, both those wanting it back and those trying to prevent its resurgence had to articulate their respective cases.[244] By contrast, the growing debate on the role of the papacy at least on the face of it had the opposite motive: the papacy was or at least looked very strong. It or its more committed defenders claimed control over all christendom not just in spiritual, but even in secular matters (as in the bull *Unam sanctam* of 1302)—something which no emperor had ever done, even though some defenders of the empire were later to employ similar language. But the strength of the papacy was in part an illusion, talked up in public debate and expressed in political symbolism even as in reality the institution was already past its heyday. As with the empire, its defenders became more ambitious at the same time as its actual power declined.[245]

This study will not deal with the thinking of the defenders of the papacy, especially as it focused essentially on a right of supervision and intervention by the pope vis-à-vis given secular political structures, not the nature of those structures themselves.[246] Concerning the latter topic, there were two basic approaches: one takes the empire as its point of departure, whereas the other adopts the perspective of the *regna particularia* or individual realms. But it is important to understand that the two approaches were not mutually exclusive. No theorist of the empire denied that the individual realms were legitimate, nor did the advocates of the latter ever question the fundamental unity of christendom, even if some of them reinterpreted it. In this chapter, we shall deal with the strand of political thinking that continued to stress the oneness of christendom, the *respublica christiana* or 'christian commonwealth', and, usually, the empire.

As mentioned, the political thinking of the period was founded on the notion of the underlying oneness of the world. All variety was ultimately rooted in this fundamental oneness and could be traced back to it (*ordinatio ad unum* or *reductio ad unum*).[247] Thus, there was only one god—set over a hierarchy of lesser creatures, celestial and earthly, that culminated in, proceeded from, and could be traced to, this one god. This tiered set-up was mirrored on earth: lesser men depended on, or at least were subordinate to, greater men, who themselves had superiors, until, at the top of the pyramid, everything came together in a single person. Or rather, two: the emperor and the pope—an ambiguity that was never satisfactorily resolved. If the principle of *ordinatio ad unum* was taken seriously, it could plausibly be argued that there was only room for one person at the top. Moreover, while it was quite possible to assert, as some did, that it was enough to have the pope at the summit of the earthly hierarchy and no emperor was necessary, nobody, not even the most ardent apologists of the empire, was ready to propose that the pope should be subordinate to the emperor, let alone that no pope was needed. The reason for this was ultimately that the church was of immense functional importance for the society of the period, while the importance of the empire was purely notional, an ideological construct. The apparent flaw in the system was thus combined with a

[244] Cf. Scholz (1903: 1–2).

[245] Cf. Scholz (1903: 446).

[246] See e.g. Scholz (1903); Wilks (1963).

[247] For a good exposition of the basic premisses underlying the political thinking of the period, see Chroust (1947).

functional imbalance in favour of the papacy, which the theory of empire was unable to overcome.

The rediscovery of the political theory of Aristotle had a profound impact on the world view of Latin christendom. 'Before the recovery of the [political] works of Aristotle in the second half of the thirteenth century, there were few sources of ideas for medieval minds that did not take for granted a world imperially organized.'[248] By contrast, Aristotle took for granted the coexistence of many totally autonomous political units. It would nevertheless be wrong to suggest (as is often done)[249] that the new aristotelianism was, as such, incompatible with the traditional view of the empire and therefore *ipso facto* a force contributing to the rise of the individual *regna* at the expense of the unity of christendom. To be sure, in the world as reflected in the works of Aristotle, the Roman empire did not exist—but neither did the 'catholic', that is universal, church. For both, the new thinking was a challenge, but not necessarily lethal. In any event, paradoxical though this may appear, if Aristotle influenced the scholastics, the opposite was true, too, in the sense that their perception of Aristotle was in fact heavily conditioned and filtered by the general thinking of the period. As we shall have occasion to see, the way in which the scholastics interpreted and paraphrased Aristotle often seems highly idiosyncratic to today's readers, and would no doubt have rather surprised Aristotle himself. Of course we should bear in mind that, a few hundred years hence, today's commentaries on Aristotle's political thinking (usually predicated on the notion that he has a 'theory of the state' of relevance to the state was we know it) may likewise appear marred by a heavy cultural bias.

In what follows, we shall look at two early fourteenth-century thinkers who made the conscious attempt to re-conceptualize the empire against the background of the new aristotelianism and in line with it—Engelbert of Admont and Dante Alighieri. Both are original thinkers, but both also reiterate many ideas that are part of the common stock of the theory of empire of the period. For the purposes of this study, they are more suitable than other writers, who usually discuss the empire in the context of the debate on whether or to what extent it was dependent on the papacy—a debate that, as explained earlier, will not be reviewed in detail here. Among those other writers are the best-known political thinkers of the age, Marsilius of Padua and William of Ockham. Engelbert and Dante do not entirely neglect the relationship between the empire and the papacy. However, Engelbert allows this question to recede into the background of a general theory of the empire as such, while Dante treats it separately as only one aspect of the topic.[250]

Finally, in this chapter we shall also look at Pierre Dubois, likewise an early fourteenth-century author. Under the impact of the same intellectual currents as Engelbert and Dante, he reinterpreted the traditional concept of the christian commonwealth in highly instructive but much-misunderstood fashion. In overviews over the history of 'international' thought, Pierre Dubois tends to be the only representative of Latin christendom apart from Aurelius Augustinus and Thomas Aquinas. There is good reason for this: Pierre is the earliest proponent, perhaps the inventor, of the concept of collective

[248] Watanabe (1963: 116).

[249] e.g. Baethgen (1964: 190); Gierke (1881: 512, 637–8); Scholz (1903: 445); Seidlmayer (1965: 41–2).

[250] On similarities and differences in the treatment of the empire by William of Ockham, Engelbert, and Dante, see Ubl (2000: 160ff.).

security. Yet contrary to the way he is often paraphrased, he was far from calling for the establishment of some kind of early version of the League of Nations or the UN. He could not call for closer links between the 'states' of christendom because the unity of christendom was still the unquestioned point of departure of his thinking. Pierre Dubois is interesting not least because he shows how strong this notion still was even in France, home to many defenders of the autonomy of the *regna* from any (secular) suzerain—such as Pierre himself.

3.4.4 Henry VII[251]

Engelbert, Dante, and Pierre all wrote around the time of the last renewal of the western imperial dignity (which this time was to last until 1806); indeed the former two probably wrote against the background of this event. To understand their thinking, it is necessary to review this background first.

In the spring of 1308, the king of Romans, Albert of Habsburg, was assassinated in a family feud. The king of France, Philip IV ('the Fair'), by far the most powerful king of christendom, thereupon requested the assistance of the pope in trying to put his brother Charles of Valois on the vacant German throne. In that case Charles stood a good chance of also obtaining the imperial coronation that had eluded all other incumbents since 1250—the pope, Clement V, was himself French (formerly Bertrand de Got, archbishop of Bordeaux), and in no position to deny the French king anything openly. Philip was threatening to bring a posthumous charge of heresy against pope Boniface VIII before a general council of the church on account of the bull *Unam sanctam*; this would have been a great embarrassment for the papacy. Moreover, in 1307, Philip had brought a sensational lawsuit against the knights Templar in France, accused of heresy, financial wrongdoing, and sexual perversion. This was still pending, and on that account, too, Clement was hard pressed to spare the church further embarrassment as well as further financial losses.

Philip had also been pursuing a policy of trying to bring the western periphery of the German kingdom and of the kingdom of Burgundy (both held by the king of Romans) under French influence by subsidizing the local magnates, among them count Henry of Luxemburg. Henry held his county from the 'Roman' (German) crown, but also held a 'money fief'—a pension—from the French king, to whom he thus owed fealty, too. Born at Valenciennes and educated at the French court, he was utterly at home in the French language and culture. Thanks to the patronage of Philip and Clement, his youngest brother Baldwin had just received the archbishopric of Trier. At 21, Baldwin had neither the minimum age nor the higher priestly orders required for such a post under canon law, but Clement obligingly provided the necessary dispensations and personally consecrated Baldwin at Poitiers in 1308, a few weeks before king Albert was killed. As archbishop of Trier, Baldwin was a member of the electoral college that would elect the new king of Romans. Well might Philip expect that Baldwin would repay his patronage and plead Charles' cause among his fellow electors.

But instead of campaigning for Charles, Baldwin with able diplomacy obtained the backing of the other electors for his brother Henry. Once crowned, Henry in turn lost no time to consolidate his position even at the risk of appearing ungrateful to Philip. Thus,

[251] For the following I am indebted to Bowsky (1960), Cognasso (1973), and Hoensch (2000).

he strove to protect the western periphery of his realm from further French encroachment. Within months of mounting the throne, he granted special powers to the count of Namur (in what is now Belgium) over the county of Cambrai (in what is now northern France). He explicitly instructed the count to restore the prerogatives of the Roman crown that he accused the bishop and chapter of Cambrai, who had hitherto exercised the rights of a count of Cambrai, of having allowed to lapse. The charter issued on this occasion illustrates how the new king presented and, presumably, also saw himself: not as 'French' or 'German', but indeed as 'Roman':

> Henry by the grace of god king of Romans . . . to the noble John of Flanders, count of Namur . . . It behooves the royal majesty to make every effort to protect those subject to it from any damage resulting from hostile incursions, to recover the borders and territory of the duchies, counties, and other lands of the realm and empire that have unjustly been usurped and appropriated, and to restore to the said duchies, counties, and lands the borders within which they were held and possessed by the Roman commonwealth while they were part of the Roman empire.[252]

On the eastern periphery of the empire, Henry succeeded in appropriating for his family the vast holdings of the Bohemian crown. The Bohemian king being a vassal of the empire, he considered those holdings to have escheated to the Roman crown as a result of the native Přemyslid dynasty becoming extinct. Recovery of the Bohemian kingdom had already been attempted by Albert, who had however met with fierce opposition from other claimants. Henry overcame this opposition with the help of the Bohemian estates (i.e. the magnates of the Bohemian realm and the representatives of its towns), who in a negotiated agreement recognized his son John as their king. In the next decades, the Bohemian lands (which also included Moravia and Silesia) were to give the dynasty the power base that its smallish home fief of Luxemburg could not provide. Henry also undertook immediately to acquire the imperial crown. Crowned king in January of 1309, in June of that year he dispatched an embassy to pope Clement at Avignon, which Clement had made his favourite residence (not least because, contrary to what is often stated or implied, it was *not* in French territory, but in the kingdom of Burgundy, separated from the French kingdom by the Rhône river—and although the borders of the French kingdom were pushed further east in the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries by the acquisition of the Dauphiné and of Provence, the county of Avignon until the end of the *ancien régime* never became part of that kingdom). Indeed Clement promised Henry the imperial crown.[253] This was of course daring of him; but Clement presumably did not feel obliged to make king Philip more powerful still by keeping down his rivals. Asked by Philip to write to the electors in support of Charles of Valois, he had done so in rather lukewarm fashion, and it seems possible that he secretly supported Baldwin and Henry against the Capetian candidacy.

In the autumn of 1310, Henry arrived in Lombardy on his way to Rome, accompanied by knights whose number oscillated between about 5,000 and a mere few hundred in

[252] *Regiam decet maiestatem, sollicitudinis studio invigilare, ut ab omni hostium incursione sibi subiectos tueatur illesos et fines ac limites ducatuum, comitatuum aliorumque locorum regni et imperii minus iuste occupatos et detentos recuperet et ducatus, comitatus et loca predicta ad fines antiquos, ubi respublica Romana eos habuerat et tenebantur, dum essent sub imperio Romano constituti, extendat.* 25.8.1309; MGH Const. 4,1 no. 291.

[253] MGH Const. 4,1 nos. 293–7.

the course of his sojourn in Italy, plus infantry. By the standards of the period, this was no insignificant force, though it was not particularly large, either. Nor, probably more importantly, did Henry have much money. Always on the verge of insolvency, he depended on the (often recalcitrant) support of creditors to maintain his travelling court. He was forced to sell titles and charges, and after his imperial coronation even pawned the crown used on that occasion. To achieve his objectives, Henry could thus rely neither on military nor on financial power. But, in any case and as with any king of the period, his most important asset was his quasi-sacral prestige as king. Henry conspicuously avoided resorting to force or the threat of it in asserting his rights as ruler over the cities and lords of Italy. He presented himself as *rex pacificus*, the peacemaker king, a formula tirelessly repeated by the lawyers with whom he surrounded himself. Italy had long been suffering from recurrent civil war between the 'ghibelline' camp (traditionally pro-imperial) and the rival 'guelfish' (anti-imperial) camp, who took their names in the twelfth century from the town of Waiblingen associated with the Hohenstaufen dynasty, and the rival Welf dynasty of Saxony; by the fourteenth century, both factions had moreover spawned subfactions.

In the Lombard towns, Henry summoned the leaders of the hostile factions to appear before him and obliged them to embrace and exchange the kiss of peace. At first, this tactic was surprisingly, spectacularly successful. The factions kept their peace, 'awed by the mildness of so great a king, whose guileless soul knew but one aim, to give peace to the world', in the words of a contemporary observer.[254] The towns opened their gates to the king voluntarily, even, after some hesitation, powerful 'guelfish' Milan, where Henry was crowned king of Italy in January 1311. This voluntary submission is the more remarkable as it had very real consequences for the towns, including materially. Supreme authority passed to representatives of the crown, who modified the towns' constitutions and supervised the restoration of their rights and property to those exiled in the quarrels between the factions. Henry also taxed the towns, indeed one motive of his Italian policy probably was the prospect of tapping their considerable wealth.

Unfortunately, the tactic employed by Henry soon lost its effectiveness. The reconciliation of the factions turned out to be superficial and fragile, since the underlying issues remained unresolved and the return of the exiles often reignited tension. Moreover, the initial success of the policy of reconciliation must have been in part due to a certain bafflement. Henry ultimately could not avoid fighting. No one in Italy dared attack him: no one challenged his legitimacy as king, and it would have been sacrilegious to take the offensive against him without compelling reason. But this simply meant that it was Henry who was obliged to take the offensive, since to preserve his authority he could not tolerate failure to submit to him. He made an example of Brescia, which had initially submitted only then to disobey him. The siege was successful, but long and arduous, and it cost the life of Henry's other brother Walram. Moreover, led by Florence, most of the towns of Tuscany, which originally had signalled friendliness, soon ceased to show any inclination to follow the example of the Lombard towns and open their gates to the king.

It became clear that, for the time being, Henry's best option was to obtain the imperial coronation, which would further enhance his prestige and which, moreover, was a goal

[254] *inhibente clementia tanti regis, cuius simplex animus totaliter aspirabat dare pacem mundo.* Giovanni da Cermenate, *Historia* 17 (1889: 39).

that he had a good chance of achieving, whereas in northern Italy he was deadlocked. Not that the imperial crown was his for the taking, despite the initial assurances of the pope. King Philip seems to have accepted the failure of Charles' candidacy; indeed, although he would no doubt have dearly liked to get rid of his ambitious, restless, and somewhat quixotic brother, he himself may well not have taken it all that seriously. But for his vassal and protégé Henry not only to be elected king, but crowned emperor was another matter. Accordingly, Philip now orchestrated an extremely clever campaign to prevent Henry's coronation in Rome. He put heavy pressure on the pope, who as a result now adopted an evasive attitude towards Henry. Philip also urged his cousin, the king of Naples Robert II of Anjou, to occupy Rome.

Robert had reason to fear the restoration of imperial power in Italy, since his claim to the kingdom of Sicily (which apart from the island itself also comprised southern Italy and whose capital was Naples) was based on conquest and the humiliation of the imperial Hohenstaufen dynasty, whose last representative Konradin his forbear Charles of Anjou had had executed at Naples in 1268. The house of Anjou itself had subsequently lost the island of Sicily as a result of a rebellion against it (the so-called 'Sicilian Vespers' of 1282). The island was currently ruled by king Ferdinand of Aragón, who, however, like the Anjou laid claim to the whole kingdom. With Henry in northern Italy, Robert potentially found himself between a rock and a hard place, especially as it was not clear if Henry as emperor would not seek to recover the kingdom of Sicily (also held by the last emperor Frederic II)—if only perhaps to award it to Ferdinand. So Robert had his brother lead troops to Rome, where they joined Tuscan troops sent by Florence and other towns.

Meanwhile, Henry stayed put for quite a while at Genoa, hesitating before his next move. At Genoa the queen, to whom he seems to have been close, died. The Florentines were blocking the land route to Rome, but the Pisans, hostile to the Florentines, provided ships to circumvent the barrier. Henry brought most of Rome under his control, but not the Vatican with Saint Peter's cathedral. Already before, Henry had asked the pope to permit the coronation to take place in another church, but had been turned down. Supported by an enthusiastic populace, Henry had himself crowned in the Lateran basilica anyway—which may have provided a slightly bizarre setting in that it had recently been devastated by a fire. On the other hand, at least there was a precedent for an emperor being crowned in that church rather than in Saint Peter's (Lothar III in 1133). Pope Clement never had any intention to crown Henry himself. He disliked Italy and avoided it; moreover, the anger of king Philip must have been an added incentive for Clement to keep a low profile here. He had appointed cardinal legates to carry out the coronation in his name. At first, they refused to perform the ceremony in the Lateran basilica. But finding themselves threatened by an angry mob, they at last did so, protesting that they were acting under duress and subject to later papal approval.

Dated 29 June 1312, Henry issued a proclamation addressed to the crowned heads and other magnates of christendom to inform them that he was now emperor. No one then alive would remember the last imperial coronation—it had taken place in 1220. So the proclamation is preceded by a lengthy preamble reaffirming the universally acknowledged ideological foundation on which the imperial office rested. God had willed, the addressees are reminded, 'that, just as all the ranks [*ordines*] of the heavenly hosts fight under him, the sole god, so also all mankind, separated into kingdoms and countries [*regna et*

provincie],[255] should be placed under a single monarchical ruler [*universi homines . . . uno principi monarche subessent*].' The order of the universe would be the more perfect

> the more, originating from one god as its creator, it is governed under one ruler and receives for itself increasing peace and unity and returns to one god and lord [*quo ab uno Deo suo factore progrediens sub uno principe moderata et in se pacis ac unitatis augmenta susciperet et in unum Deum et dominum . . . rediret*] . . . And whereas in previous ages this kind of princely rule [*huiusmodi principatus*] was located in various nations [*in diversis fuerit nationibus*] . . . , yet at last, as the fullness of time was approaching, when that same god our lord . . . desired to become human, . . . the aforementioned dominion [*imperium*] providently passed to the Romans by the working of god's grace.

In this manner, the text says, the imperial throne (*imperialis excellencie thronus*) was established in the same city that was later also to be the seat of the highest spiritual dignity (*sacerdotalis et apostolica sedes*)—perhaps this was intended as a reminder that the empire was actually older than the papacy, which in the thinking of the period should have given it added prestige. The papal and the imperial authority (*pontificis et imperatoris auctoritas*) thus radiated from the same place, as a vicarious representation (*vicaria imago*) of the authority of god.[256]

This did not mean that Henry was hoping to undo the separation of mankind into 'kingdoms and countries'—an implausible proposition given his lack of military resources, and, as we shall see in the next section, at odds with contemporary political thinking. Ten years earlier, in the bull *Unam sanctam*, pope Boniface VIII had proclaimed the subordination of all secular authority to the spiritual power. This is the principal content of that short text, set forth in clear, incisive wording (*Oportet autem . . . temporalem auctoritatem spirituali subiici potestati*).[257] By contrast, in Henry's circular, the passage quoted forms the *harenga* or preamble, the part of an official announcement which then as now served to situate the substantive content of the document against the background of general considerations with which most people could be expected to agree. The substantive content of Henry's circular is an account of his journey to Rome to receive the imperial crown; the quoted passage from the *harenga* is simply a rehash of the traditional (by then perhaps old-fashioned, but still powerful) worldview of the period and the place that the empire had in it.

As tends to be the case with any such preamble, unlike the incisive language of *Unam sanctam* Henry's *harenga* is over-elaborate and opaque. Moreover, the language is actually very cautious. The new emperor had to claim his place at the top of the earthly hierarchy that unavoidably went with the post—he could not claim the imperial dignity and then not claim preeminence over all other rulers. But in asserting his preeminence he avoids as much as possible any terminology that other rulers might interpret as an attack on their rights or autonomy. Thus, pope and emperor are described as jointly constituting a 'vicarious representation [*vicaria imago*]' of the authority of god. But it is not clear from that how close the representation is supposed to be to

[255] *provincia* in the usage of the period regularly means '(independent) country'. This usage is already found in the early 5th cent. in Paulus Orosius (see supra n. 222).

[256] MGH Const. 4,2 no. 801, section 1.

[257] Printed e.g. in Mirbt and Aland (1967: 458–60).

its archetype. No doubt the authority of god over the lower echelons of the celestial hierarchy was considered absolute; but the text at least fails to assert explicitly that the same was true of the authority of the pope and the emperor over the earthly hierarchy.

In line with this, god is qualified in the text as *dominus*, lord, but this word is not applied to the emperor. God 'is in command [*imperat*]' over 'everything that the inexpressible might of his greatness has created [*que sue magestatis* (*sic*) *ineffabili potencia condidit*]'—Latin *potentia* (at the time 't' was often used interchangeably with 'c' before 'i') 'might' means brute power, not official, legally conditioned power (*potestas*). God has 'subjected everything to the authority of his command [*sub sue ditionis imperio universa subgessit*]'. By contrast, the subordination of all men to the emperor is expressed by the verb *subsum* 'to be under', the most neutral, colourless available. The text says that just as the universe was brought forth by a single creator, god, so also it should be governed under (in the sense of being under the supervision or guidance of) a single prince (*machina mundi . . . ab uno Deo suo factore progrediens sub uno principe moderata*): the verb expressing this function of the emperor is *moderor*, whose participle *moderatus* connotes—moderation (cf. the title 'moderator' of the chairman of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland). The agency of the emperor is expressed by the preposition *sub* 'under' rather than by the preposition *ab* 'by' as it would have been in 'classical' Latin: although this usage is typical of the period, it again reinforces the impression of the emperor as a remote, almost notional presence, not of hands-on involvement and active domination.

In his reply, the English king, Edward II, gives no hint of any displeasure at the circular.

> To his most cherished friend, the most excellent prince and lord, Henry, by the grace of god emperor of the Romans [etc.], Edward, by the grace of god [etc.] . . . hail . . . The son of god, who without doubt is king of kings and lord of those in power [*dominus dominantium*], having entrusted the empire to the governorship [*regimini*] of a man who is farsighted and experienced, it may be hoped that both spiritual and temporal affairs will prosper the more happily throughout the world [!—*ubique terrarum*]. Having received, with joyful hand [*leta manu*] [the letter that you have] sent us concerning your having been elected Roman emperor by the princes of Germany, . . . [and] the ceremony of your consecration and coronation . . . , we have heard and diligently listened to its words, greatly rejoicing in its contents . . . We put our hope, then, in the lord Jesus Christ, that by your powerful efforts [*per vestre strenuitatis potenciam*] and your prudent and farsighted activities [*circumspectionis industriam providam*] the entire catholic people [*universa gens catholica*, i.e. christendom] may be granted wholesome increase in the lord [*salubria in Domino suscipiet incrementa*], to the confusion, in particular, and perpetual abasement of the enemies of the cross of Christ and the exaltation of our christian faith.[258]

('Having received, with joyful hand, . . . we . . . listened': the circular would have been formally presented to the king, and then read out.)

It took the English chancery the better part of a year to dispatch this reply—perhaps it was waiting for the reaction of other players more intimately involved. The most important among these were Philip of France and the pope. The French king answered

[258] MGH Const. 4,2 no. 812.

very quickly, acknowledging Henry's new title.[259] In his reply, he paraphrases Henry's circular in much stronger language than is used in the original, claiming that according to the circular all men were to be under the 'temporal might' (*temporalis potentia*) of the emperor; Philip also explicitly calls this *subiectio*. He observes that this language (*loquendi modus*) of the circular had caused 'not a little surprise [*admiratio non modica*]' among those in his realm who had received it. Ten years earlier, when Boniface VIII spoke of subjecting him to his *potestas*, Philip not only rejected that claim but, spectacularly, dispatched one of his councillors, Guillaume de Nogaret, to the papal palace at Anagni (outside Rome) formally to accuse the pope of heresy; Italian troops accompanying Guillaume, though not under his control, manhandled the frightened pontiff, who died shortly afterwards—probably not of any physical injuries suffered on that occasion, yet rumours of course flew, and Philip was seen by many as at least partly responsible. This time, having reworded Henry's preamble to sharpen it into an expression of real imperial overlordship, Philip actually accepted it—for the rest of christendom.

He insists that it could not apply to the French kingdom, which the emperor in his circular ought to have exempted (*excipere debuisset*). In an allusion to the doctrine that the emperor as protector of the church wielded the secular sword on its behalf, Philip argues that the christian religion had always been so secure in France that that realm had received from Christ himself the 'unique privilege' (*singularis prerogativa*) of exemption from imperial suzerainty—I have already quoted this passage.[260] At the beginning of the letter, the emperor as addressee should have been named first, before the sender, since in terms of protocol he would normally be considered superior to all other secular rulers. Edward II of England observes this custom ('To his most cherished friend the . . . emperor . . . [king] Edward . . . hail'). By contrast, Philip, no doubt to drive home his refusal to accept that the emperor was in any way superior to the king of France, names himself first and the emperor in second position ('Philip, by the grace of god king of France, to the illustrious prince Henry, by the same grace emperor of the Romans . . . hail'). Philip moreover complains that in the copy of the circular sent to the burgesses of Lyon (part of the kingdom of Burgundy but occupied by Philip in 1310) those burgesses were referred to as *fideles* ('faithful', meaning that they owed fealty) and as subjects (*subditi*), which Philip suggests must have been an error. Of course it was not; the annexation of Lyon was a manifestation of the eastward expansion of his kingdom at the expense of the empire that Philip sought and which Henry was unwilling to condone.[261]

In the light of the fact that both Henry's election as king and his imperial coronation constituted a defeat for Philip, his quick acceptance of Henry's imperial title may appear surprising. But Philip consistently avoided breaking openly with Henry. As long as possible, the presence in Rome of Neapolitan troops under the brother of the king of Sicily (Naples) was justified by the intention of that brother to represent the Neapolitan king at the coronation. Once that pretext was exposed, rather than contest the legitimacy of the coronation on the technicality of its having taken place in what was arguably the wrong church, Philip preferred to concede his defeat. The alternative would have been open disrespect for the sacred prestige of the emperor, which would have alienated many

[259] MGH Const. 4,2 no. 811.
[260] Supra n. 179.
[261] On the Lyon question see Strayer (1980: 356–64).

in christendom without offering any compensating political advantage. Pope Clement did not contest the validity of the coronation, either.[262]

At the same time, it was a shrewd move on Philip's part to pretend to understand Henry as claiming the effective *subiectio* of christendom to him, even though the circular itself is more than guarded on this point. The restoration of the imperial dignity after such a long time was an event whose consequences could not yet be gauged. With few troops and almost no money, but making skilful, charismatic use of his legitimacy as *Romanus princeps*, Henry had already come a long way from his comparatively humble origins. He was only in his late thirties, and there was no telling what he would yet prove capable of. It was advisable, then, to guard against the possibility, however remote, that one day he or his successors *would* claim suzerainty over neighbouring realms. On the other hand, one of those successors might yet be a Capetian, in which case it would actually be useful to have stated the role of the emperor in strong terms. The idea of a Capetian emperor was not new and continued to be pursued. Already in 1273, Philip III of France had wanted to be elected king of Romans but lost to Rudolf of Habsburg; Charles of Valois, as we saw, lost to Henry in 1308; after Henry's death, Philip IV attempted, again unsuccessfully, to have one of his sons (subsequently Philip V of France) elected.[263]

It is interesting that Philip IV, as the most powerful ruler of christendom, describes the imperial office in terms that imply 'real' power, whereas Henry, being in a more precarious position, does not. But it is even more important to understand that his lack of material power did not necessarily translate into political weakness, or put differently: legitimacy was such an important ingredient of rulership that even an emperor who militarily was at best a second-rate player (most of them were, if that) could still have substantial political leverage and be a serious opponent to someone like Philip IV. Moreover, in recognizing that Philip was the most powerful christian ruler of his age we must also of course bear in mind that this says nothing about his absolute power. Philip was more powerful than anyone else in Latin christendom at that time, and also, probably, than any previous ruler of Latin christendom. But as pointed out already, and as will become clearer still in the next chapter, *no* ruler of Latin christendom (or indeed the post-Reformation *ancien régime*) had very much absolute power in the sense of a real capacity to exercise control over his subjects. To the extent that this capacity existed, it rested largely on voluntary cooperation of the subjects. Still more so than is the case nowadays, power-holders resembled riders. Physically, any horse is incomparably stronger than any human; if a horse allows a human to mount it and obeys his or her commands, this is not because the human is capable of coercing it but because the horse is trained to accept his or her authority.

Power-holders of the period did not owe their position to their material power, of which often enough they had rather little. Inversely, the legitimacy of their position was a necessary condition of their having material power (though not a sufficient one). Henry of Luxemburg faced the problem that he wanted the imperial dignity because it enhanced his legitimacy and potentially increased his political leverage within the dominions of the 'Roman' crown. But in gaining it he acquired notional authority over christendom in its

[262]Papal reply: MGH Const. 4,2 no. 810. Unfortunately, since the exact date is apparently known neither for the papal reply nor for Philip's—both are roughly dated late July–August by their MGH editors—it is not clear whether it was the pope or Philip who first recognized the new emperor and whether or not they did so independently of each other.

[263]On these Capetian candidacies see Kämpf (1935: 45–53); Zeller (1964).

entirety, saddling him with a larger political role than he perhaps would have sought had he been free to define it himself. Traditionally the emperor was *dominus mundi*, 'lord of the world', a notion that occurs just once in the Justinianic *Corpus iuris*,[264] but (somewhat paradoxically in light of the recurrent enmity between the empire and the papacy) was developed in twelfth-century canon law. If I am not mistaken, Henry himself never called himself that. As we saw, any such terminology seems to have been studiously avoided in the preamble of the 1312 circular. Nevertheless one gains the impression that, in proportion as he became bogged down in the complexities of Italian politics, Henry increasingly resorted to invoking the 'absolutist' concept of emperorhood enshrined in the Justinianic *Corpus* and with which the lawyers advising him were of course familiar. Once he had been crowned emperor, he formally accused those refusing to acknowledge his authority of the *crimen laesae maiestatis*—the Roman-law equivalent of high treason (the expression predates the establishment of the monocracy, and the term *maiestas* originally referred not to the ruler but to the Roman people).

In two sentences passed in February and March 1313 against the towns of Tuscany and other Tuscan rebels, Henry stresses the obedience that the accused owed 'our high dignity [*nostra magnificentia*]'. 'Thoughtlessly', Henry complains, 'they mock us, the supreme prince of the world, repaying favour with calumny, benevolence with contempt [*in nos summum mundi principem proterviunt inconsulte reddentes nobis pro gratia contumeliam, pro benefitio contemptum*].' 'Supreme prince of the world' sounds grandiose, but again the expression 'lord of the world' is rather pointedly *not* used. Henry observes that the guilt of the accused was manifest (in the sense that indeed their refusal to pay homage was not something that they themselves would have denied), and that if he had offered them a chance to answer for their behaviour and mend their ways it was solely from 'imperial clemency' (*ex augusti clementia*). In any case, as Henry also points out, the emperor was not subject to the laws (*nos qui legibus subiecti non sumus*: this reflects the famous phrase *princeps legibus solutus* of the *Corpus iuris*). [265]

It proved difficult to subjugate the Tuscan towns and other rebels one by one, on the basis of those sentences. Henry laid siege to Florence after his imperial coronation, then lifted it again and decided to turn against Robert of Anjou first. Robert was the central figure of the resistance against Henry. He held the kingdom of Sicily as a papal fief, while also acting as official agent of the pope in northern Italy. Moreover, the house of Anjou was among the greatest debtors of the great Florentine bankers, who had reason to fear for their money if the Anjou dynasty came to grief. Further, Robert was a close relative of the French king, on whose support he counted to defend himself against Ferdinand of Aragón (rival king of Sicily and in possession of the island of Sicily), as well as against Henry. With king Philip urging Robert to take action against Henry (the alliance with Florence, the occupation of the Vatican), Henry in turn was pushed to take action against Robert. In particular, he entered into an alliance with Ferdinand. As a result (and this may well have been the prime objective pursued by Philip), pope Clement was obliged to review his original pro-imperial stance: to maintain it would now have meant sacrificing his vassal Robert. This would have been a loss of face and, even worse, it would have been an open challenge to king Philip. Given the means at Philip's disposal for bringing pressure to bear on the church, Clement could not afford that. Clement had long been admonishing

[264] Digest 14.2.9.
[265] MGH Const. 4,2 no. 915 (section 2), no. 916 (section 4). *princeps legibus solutus*: Digest 1.3.31.

Henry to marry his daughter to the heir to the Anjou throne. In the acknowledgement that he sent Henry to recognize him as emperor, he expresses dismay that the daughter in question had now been given to someone else, and again urges the new emperor to patch up his relationship with Robert.

For Henry, the problem with this was that it would tie him to the house of Anjou and to the French crown, and thus undo his attempted escape, as king of Romans, from the French orbit. He had the choice between, as it were, returning to the Capetian fold, and continuing to assert his independence; the latter meant fighting it out with Robert. With Robert defeated, king Philip would no longer have much leverage over Henry, and the opposition of the Tuscan towns that Robert fomented would be weakened. But Henry could not simply attack Robert without damaging his legitimacy and making it difficult for other actors, such as the pope, to accept his victory if he gained it; he needed legal grounds for a war. Attacking Florence and other Tuscan towns posed no legal problem since Henry was generally recognized as their liege. Their failure to pay homage was sufficient grounds for him to make war on them. But as king of Sicily Robert was generally considered a vassal of the pope, not the emperor, and an attack on him therefore could not be justified by invoking feudal law. Moreover, given the political situation such an attack was an enormous provocation for the most powerful actors in christendom, the king of France and the pope.

It therefore seemed advisable to deploy the heaviest ideological weapon available—the concept of imperial power as enshrined in the Justinianic *Corpus* and Roman law. Accordingly, the preamble of an imperial edict of 2 April 1313 posits that the order of the entire world depended on the Roman empire (*Romanum imperium, in cuius tranquillitate totius orbis regularitas requiescit*), and that 'every soul' was 'subject' to the Roman ruler, not just according to human law but also according to divine law (*nedum humana, verum etiam divina precepta, quibus iubetur quod omnis anima Romano principi sit subiecta*)—an allusion, it would appear, to Romans 13.1ff., a passage which, without naming the Roman ruler or empire explicitly, was effectively intended by the apostle Paul to mean pretty much that. Interestingly, the decree, like other documents emanating from the imperial chancery, was issued not just in Latin but also in French, presumably because its main targets—Philip, Clement, and possibly Robert, with their respective followings—were native French speakers.[266]

On this basis, Robert, too, was accused by Henry of the *crimen laesae maiestatis*. Having failed to appear before the emperor (then residing at Pisa) to defend himself, on 26 April he was condemned to death in his absence. In his sentence, Henry explains that as emperor he gladly treated 'faithful' kings and princes with honours appropriate to their rank, but was forced to pass the sentence against Robert 'so that guilt might fear punishment and virtue expect a reward'.[267] But if this implies a claim to suzerainty over other kings, it must be remembered that this was the only basis available on which to justify action against Robert, which in turn was necessary to safeguard the imperial dignity. Retreating before Robert and his Tuscan allies would have exposed Henry to

[266] MGH Const. 4,2 no. 929. French version: *l'empire de Rome, en la pais dou quel empire la regularite de tout le monde se repose . . . les comandemenz non seulement humains, mais ceux de Dieu, par les queux est commande que toute anme soit souzgite au Romain prince.*

[267] *licet fideles reges et principes propter ipsorum dignitatis eminentiam libenter condignis honoribus et gratiosis favoribus prosequamur, tamen ut culpa supplicium timeat et virtus premium retributionis expectet* etc. MGH Const. 4,2 no. 946 (section 5).

ridicule. The whole Italian imbroglio consistently shows that even if Henry was initially reluctant to go very far in claiming rights and preeminence for himself in his imperial capacity, this kind of reticence was impossible to sustain in the face of opposition against him. The sentence against Robert stripped him of all rights and titles, absolved anyone who owed it from allegiance to him, forbade assistance to him, and declared all his dominions and property to escheat to the emperor. In this it resembles the sanctions imposed on the north Italian rebels, except that Henry had pronounced the death penalty neither against the Tuscan rebels nor the leaders of the Brescia revolt. Robert replied to the sentence in a document that, unsurprisingly, denies that Henry had any jurisdiction over him. It observes that Robert was not a vassal of the empire, and that Henry held no higher rank than Robert: but no one could be judged by someone of equal rank (*par in parem non habet arbitrium iudicandi*).[268]

The sentence against Robert forced pope Clement to act, or should have done; in fact, king Philip had to prod Clement repeatedly.[269] Henry having claimed for himself the position of supreme secular judge of christendom, Clement answered in kind by invoking his own supreme spiritual authority, threatening anyone attacking Robert with excommunication (without naming Henry explicitly).[270] Henry sent an embassy to Avignon to conciliate the pope,[271] but at the same time led his troops out of Pisa against Robert. He might well have prevailed, but since, almost immediately after the start of the campaign, he succumbed to the malaria that he had contracted in Italy and that had been weakening him severely for some time, his whole effort at restoring the imperial position in Italy collapsed. Tellingly for the very personal quality of political power at that time, his army immediately dissolved, despite attempts by king Ferdinand of Sicily to keep it in being.

In the famous bull *Pastoralis cura* pope Clement later declared the sentence against Robert to be null and void, asserting that the power of the emperor could only be exercised within the *districtus imperii*, the territory of the empire, and denying that the emperor was the suzerain of the other kings of christendom. The bull is often seen as a milestone in the development of the concept of 'territorial sovereignty'.[272] To my mind, this teleological interpretation of the document is hardly justified. In fact, on account perhaps of a certain insecurity regarding what principles might be applied here, the bull piles up whatever arguments might serve its purpose, ignoring the question whether they were compatible with each other. Predictably, Clement, too, invokes feudal law (Robert not being a vassal of the empire). Moreover, while denying suzerainty to the emperor the pope actually invokes for himself a quasi-imperial position surprisingly similar to that proclaimed by his predecessor Boniface in *Unam sanctam*—hardly a 'forward-looking' attitude or compatible with any kind of 'territorial sovereignty'.[273]

[268] Undated (after 26.4.1313), MGH Const. 4,2 no. 947.

[269] Philip wrote to Clement on 12.5.1313, MGH Const. 4,2 no. 948. This letter alludes to an earlier one not in MGH.

[270] MGH Const. 4,2 no. 1003.

[271] MGH Const. 4,2 nos. 1004–8.

[272] e.g. and probably most influentially, by Walter Ullmann (e.g. 1965: 197–8).

[273] *Pastoralis cura*, MGH Const. 4,2 no. 1166. The trial and sentence against Robert are declared to be invalid because

- the emperor had unreasonably summoned the defendant to appear in territory hostile to him, thus effectively denying him the chance to defend himself mandated by natural law

Pastoralis cura notwithstanding, the two imperial decrees *Ad reprimenda* and *Quoniam nuper* that Henry, using the legislative power which the *Corpus iuris* vested in the emperor, had passed (to create the possibility to try rebels summarily in their absence and to define the charge of rebellion against the emperor) were incorporated by the lawyers of the period in the *Corpus iuris* and thus became part of the *ius commune* of christendom.[274]

3.4.5 Engelbert of Admont

'One day when I was sitting with friends—wise, mature men—and having a conversation with them, one topic happened to be the Roman empire and realm [or 'kingdom', *imperium sive regnum*] and its condition': thus begins a treatise by the abbot of Admont in Styria, Engelbert, a contemporary of the events described in the preceding section. There seems to have been consensus in this conversation that the empire was tottering. The view was put forward that 'this empire and realm was already so weakened in terms of its rights and strength [*in suis iuribus et viribus*] that it would likely soon disappear and cease to exist entirely.' And why not: it was proposed that 'from the very beginning of its rise, the Roman empire had illegally and unjustly subjugated the kingdoms of the world and the population of the various *gentes* and nations by warfare and force of arms [*illicite et iniuste regna mundi et populos diversarum nationum et gentium subegisset armorum violentia et bellorum*]' (I leave the word *gentes*—normally, 'peoples'—untranslated since, as will become clear later on, Engelbert gives it a very specific meaning).

The notion that Roman rule was of doubtful legitimacy because it was the result of violent conquest was an old one. It was discussed for example by Paulus Orosius and Aurelius Augustinus at the beginning of the fifth century, when it already had a tradition in christian thought, although there was also a broad current of patriotic christian support for the empire.[275] By the time Engelbert was writing, criticism of the violent origin of the empire was again commonly used to challenge its legitimacy—for example in a memorandum that (probably quite soon after Henry VII's death) Robert

- the pope, in his capacity as ordinary judge (*iudex ordinarius*) of the defendant, should have been asked to hand him over, rather than being officially informed of the trial only after the sentence had been passed
- although the emperor might be the liege of the defendant with regard to some lands, he was not his liege with regard to the kingdom of Sicily, which was his fixed, permanent, and known residence (*certum continuum notorium domicilium*); the emperor had no jurisdiction outside the *districtus imperii*
- the pope was competent to annul the sentence, a claim that in its turn is based on three arguments: (*a*) papal suzerainty over the empire (*superioritas quam ad imperium non est dubium nos habere*)—essentially this was the much-contested theory that because the emperor could only become emperor if the pope crowned him, the pope must be his suzerain (*b*) re-assumption by the pope of all imperial prerogatives if the imperial throne fell vacant (*potestas in qua vacante imperio imperatori succedimus*) (*c*) the full powers (*plenitudo potestatis*) that Christ as lord of all secular rulers had granted to Peter and his successors (an interpretation of the role of the papacy based on Matthew 16.19; but Henry likewise invoked *plenitudo potestatis* for himself in the cited sentences, as, by that time, did other kings, too).

[274] Canning (1996: 165); text of the decrees: MGH Const. 4,2 nos. 930, 932. The *incipit* (opening words) of the former is commonly given in the literature as *Ad reprimendum*, but this is not supported by the text as given in the MGH.

[275] Paulus Orosius 5.1; Aurelius Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* e.g. 1.6.

of Anjou addressed to pope Clement to admonish him not to agree to any further imperial coronation in future.[276] Accordingly, in the conversation sketched by Engelbert, some thought it only proper if the various 'kingdoms, principalities, and nations [*regna et principatus et nationes*]' had, for a long time already and with increasing success, sought to 'fight and diminish the empire, until in the near future it would be completely destroyed'. Engelbert (∼1250–1331) takes this conversation as his starting point for a treatise 'On the origin [or: "rise"] and end [or: "purpose"] of the Roman empire', *De ortu et fine Romani imperii*.[277]

The treatise is not dated, but on one occasion Engelbert speaks of 'Henry, seventh of that name, who in our time has sat [*sedit*] at the helm of the empire as the ninety-seventh emperor since Augustus'. The word 'emperor' (rather than 'king') makes clear that Engelbert wrote after the imperial coronation of 1312, indeed quite possibly when Henry was already dead. The general assumption in the literature is that Engelbert must have composed the treatise 'in the reign of Henry VII'—as, for example, Marlis Hamm in her monograph on the treatise asserts, followed by more recent authors like Antony Black and Karl Ubl. But Hamm quotes the passage in question differently: 'who in our time sits [*sedet*] at the helm of the empire'. Her source is a 1614 printing of the treatise. Likewise, the 1998 edition of the treatise by Wilhelm Baum, based on a 1610 printing, has *sedet*, rather than *sedit* as in the first printed edition of 1553, used here. Which form of the verb should be considered correct is a question that cannot be resolved until someone compares and evaluates the extant manuscripts. Meanwhile, it seems to me that the authority of the 1553 edition is greater than that of any later edition, which (again until the manuscripts are evaluated critically) must be considered likely to reproduce directly or indirectly the first printing, rather than reflect any independent study of the manuscripts.[278]

If Engelbert wrote 'has sat at the helm' rather than 'sits', then of course the emperor may well have been dead when he wrote. Otherwise, he would have had to write rather quickly, since Henry was emperor only for just over a year. Moreover, during that year

[276] MGH Const. 4,2 no. 1253. On this document, see Jäschke (1982); on this type of criticism of the empire in general, see Walther (1976: 71–2).

[277] Engelbert himself calls his treatise—which he identifies unambiguously by its *incipit* or opening words—by this title in a letter listing his works: it is there referred to as *De ortu et fine Romani imperii tractatus. Qui incipit: Consedentibus et colloquentibus mecum* (Engelbert 1998: 206). The first printed edn. (Engelbert 1553) also gives the title in this form. The critical edn. that was to have been published in the MGH long ago continues to be delayed. The bilingual Latin-German edn. by Wilhelm Baum (Engelbert 1998) is marred by numerous errors in the Latin text evidently due to negligence, nor is the German trans. very good; cf. the review of that edn. by Karl Ubl (1999). The 1553 edn., which I have used, is apparently based on two identifiable 14th-cent. manuscripts, of which one is kept in the library of Admont abbey (Codex Admontensis 600) while the other, which has autograph marginal notes by Engelbert, is now in the Austrian National Library (cf. on this the remarks by Baum in Engelbert 1998: 272). The spelling (and, presumably, the punctuation) of the 1553 edn., however, is clearly not that of the 14th-cent. manuscripts, but follows humanist usage. I have felt at liberty to employ what is nowadays considered the 'classical' spelling on the fairly rare occasions where that is different (e.g. *felicitas* instead of *foelicitas* in the 1553 edn.). I have not seen the English trans. in Izbicki and Nederman (2000); the trans. offered here is my own. On Engelbert and *De ortu*, see esp. Fowler (1947); Hamm (1974); Kelsen (1905: 33–7); Menzel (1962); Schmidinger (1978); Schulz (1939); Ubl (2000).

[278] *Henricus huius nominis septimus, qui nostro tempore ad imperii clavum sedit imperator 97 ab ipso Augusto.* Engelbert, *De ortu* 16 (1553 edn.). Treatise dated to 'the reign of Henry VII' by Hamm (1974: 423–4); Black (1992: 93); Ubl (2000: 155). Hamm quotes the treatise from Melchior Goldast (ed.), *Politica imperialia* (Frankfurt 1614)—Hamm (1974: 352 n.). The new edn. by Baum (Engelbert 1998) follows that by Joachim Cluten (Offenbach 1610).

he would likely have appeared as a rather successful ruler who had managed to do what others had not—to obtain the imperial coronation in the first place, and who might well go on, by defeating Robert of Anjou, significantly to boost the imperial authority in Italy. Conversely, his death meant the failure of that attempt, which would help to explain why the 'wise and mature men' cited by Engelbert in the preface to his treatise display such a pessimistic attitude towards the empire. With Henry gone, not only was there no emperor any more, but it did not look as if that would change soon. The election of the next king of Romans was split, resulting in a situation where a son of the murdered king Albert, Frederic of Habsburg, and duke Louis of Bavaria both claimed the throne. Louis was supported by the Luxemburg party headed by archbishop Baldwin of Trier, who considered his nephew king John of Bohemia too young to be king of Romans, and as personally not very suitable. The conflict between Louis and Frederic went on until Frederic was defeated in battle in 1322.

Meanwhile, the formidable John XXII—to whom the declaration of Arbroath is addressed—had been chosen as pope. Another Frenchman, elected in 1316 at the age of 72, he disappointed the expectation that he would be a transitional incumbent by reigning until 1334. During that time, he drove many to desperation by his meddling and intransigence, Louis among them: John declared his election invalid, excommunicated him in 1324, refused entreaties, and would not die. Instead, he pushed for a new election, which Louis sought to counter by reconciling himself with Frederic. He offered Frederic the co-regency of the realm, and even to step down himself, if that would induce pope John to recognize Frederic and lift the interdict that affected all of Louis' numerous followers in the realm. Unmoved, the pope tried to win the Luxemburg party for his plan of a new election—after all, two members of that dynasty had electoral rank: Baldwin of Trier, a much respected figure in the politics of the empire until his death in 1354, and king John of Bohemia. The Luxemburg party probably assumed that the pope would accept John of Bohemia as king of Romans, only to discover that the sole candidate that he was prepared to endorse was actually Philip of Valois, nephew of Philip IV, despite the fact that he had just—in 1328—mounted the French throne as Philip VI.

Also in 1328, Louis of Bavaria finally received the imperial crown in Rome from a representative of the 'Roman people', Sciarra Colonna (in fact a member of the high Roman nobility, who had participated in the humiliation of pope Boniface at Anagni in 1303). As emperor, Louis proceeded to declare pope John (who resided at Avignon) deposed and had an anti-pope elected in Rome, who then crowned him. The whole long-running conflict between Louis and pope John (which of course continued for many more years) was accompanied by a furious exchange of tracts discussing the respective position and rights of pope and emperor; in that debate, prominent thinkers like Marsilius of Padua and William of Ockham took the side of the emperor. By 1328, when christendom at last had an emperor again though his legitimacy was disputed, Engelbert himself was an old man, and almost certainly had already included our treatise in a list of his works variously dated to 'about' 1320 or 1325.[279]

[279] The list is part of a letter printed as *Epistula ad Ulricum scholasticum Wiennensem* in Engelbert (1998), where it is dated 'about 1320'; Hamm (1974: 355) dates the same letter to about 1325. F. A. von der Heydte (1952: 155) also dates the treatise itself to 'about 1320', without any discussion.

Engelbert bases himself on the premiss—credited to Aristotle's *Physics*—that time destroys rather than creates: the older a thing gets, the more it decays.[280] Moreover, in conformity with pre-christian Greek philosophy, Engelbert posits that whatever is in accordance with 'nature' is good. (Latin *natura* is derived from the verb 'to be born', its Greek equivalent *phýsis* from the verb 'to grow': in either language the term expresses that which is original, un-tampered with.) Therefore, Engelbert explains, what is bad is necessarily posterior to what is good, since everything is good at its inception: something that has only just come into being is still in harmony with nature, and will be corrupted only in the course of time. Necessarily, thus, the first 'kingdoms and principalities [*regna et principatus*]' must have been the best, arising 'as it were at the behest of nature itself [*quasi natura instigante*]'. But what are the 'best' kingdoms? They are characterized by the fact that it is the best who rule. As with everything in nature, so also among men there is a natural hierarchy—in particular, men differ 'in terms of understanding and reason [*intellectu et ratione*]'. According to Aristotle, it is natural for the wise to rule the less wise. Engelbert cites pre-christian authors in support of his thesis that the original kingdoms really were marked by the rule of those possessed of the greatest goodness (*bonitas*), probity (*probitas*), and virtue (*virtus*). The original kingdoms were associations of people sharing the same language, lifestyle (*vita*), and customs (*mores*). That being so, they had no interest in expansion.[281] However, corruption was simply a matter of time. As Aristotle explains, in the soul of man reason should govern the passions.[282] But it is not always the case; so bad rulers were inevitable. They were responsible for spoiling the original perfect kingdoms. Nínos, king of the Assyrians, was the first to create a great empire by conquest, which Engelbert condemns. His lust for conquest was born from arrogance (*superbia*: numbered among the passions), making him a bad king. It was arrogance that brought conflict between kings and citizens (*cives*) and among the citizens themselves and caused oppression of the lesser (*minores*) by the greater (*maiores*).[283]

How are kingdoms and principalities to be judged? Engelbert proposes three criteria: their happiness, their justice, and their greatness. Regarding happiness (*felicitas*), Engelbert invokes Aristotle to expound that it is the ultimate object of every human action. But the greatest happiness is that of the greatest number of people: therefore, the household (*domus*) is subordinated to (*ordinatur ad*) the city (*civitas*), the city to the kingdom or principality. (Later on, Engelbert will add the village—*vicus*—and the *gens* to this hierarchy.)[284] Engelbert calls happy a realm

> whose king or prince governs himself and his people rightly, who is content with his honours, rights, possessions, and borders, who cares well for the former and makes proper use of the latter: not encroaching on the possessions of his people, nor invading foreigners unjustly, peaceful with the neighbours, deservedly liked by his people.[285]

[280] Engelbert, *De ortu* 4, 21; cf. Aristotle, *Physikḗ akróasis* 221*a b*, 222*b*, but also e.g. *Politiká* 1254*a* 36, 1275*a* 39.

[281] Engelbert, *De ortu* 1–2; cf. Aristotle, *Politiká* 1254*b* 15ff.

[282] e.g. Aristotle, *Politiká* 1254*b* 5ff.

[283] Engelbert, *De ortu* 3–4.

[284] Engelbert, *De ortu* 7. For Aristotle on happiness cf. *Nikomachean Ethics*, e.g. 1095*a* 15ff.

[285] *illud regnum, et ille principatus in veritate poterit dici felix, cuius rex vel princeps se et suos recte regens, suis honoribus, iuribus, rebus ac terminis est contentus, illis bene providens, et ipsis bene utens:*

Regarding justice (*iustitia*) Engelbert explains that rulers can be just only if they have both acquired their position justly and exercise it justly. Rule can be acquired by election, inheritance, or conquest (*occupatio*). The latter, however, is only just if the war that preceded it had a just cause (Engelbert does not elaborate on this) and if the conquered agree to their new rulers, at least in the long run. So, were the Romans just conquerors? As we saw, this was considered a crucial question when Engelbert wrote. Engelbert answers in the affirmative: yes, each conquest of the Romans was made in pursuit of a just cause. In certain instances Rome even acquired lands without conquest, in particular by inheritance. Moreover, the conquered always ultimately consented to being incorporated in the empire: when they 'found Roman rule to be tolerable, moderate, and fair [*tolerabile et modestum et aequum*], forced submission became voluntary'. Since Rome had both acquired and administered its realm justly, the Roman empire was legitimate.[286]

As for the greatness (*magnitudo*) of a realm, Engelbert explains that it can be measured in terms of quantity (*quantitas*) or in terms of 'virtue' (*virtus*), here used in the sense of excellence. Regarding the latter aspect, Engelbert cites Aristotle as saying that a doctor or architect is not called great because of his bodily size.[287] Likewise, a realm should be judged according to the virtue or excellence of its ruler in his capacity as such (*virtus regalis*). This consists of justice (*iustitia*) and power (in the sense of might, *potentia*): power must be guided by justice, but it is needed to implement and defend what is just.[288] Note how highly personalized this view is: the excellence of the ruler determines the qualitative greatness of a realm. By contrast, impersonal factors like geography barely rate a mention, and there is no discussion at all of the institutional set-up of a realm—the reason no doubt being that anything that could have been said on this account really went without saying, society at that time being largely self-organizing in conformity with universally accepted patterns.

Regarding *quantitas*, Engelbert again conceives of it in terms of people, rather than in terms of territory. He asserts that Aristotle distinguishes five types of community: the household, the village, the city, the *gens*, and the realm (*regnum*); and that the *quantitas* or 'quantity' of a realm is determined by them. In fact, only the first three are found in Aristotle, for whom the *pólis* (*civitas* in the Latin version, which contemporaries understood as meaning 'city' rather than 'citizenry' or 'citizenship') was the be-all and end-all of social organization. Aristotle moreover establishes the distinction of his three types of community in passing and does not return to it since he is really only interested in the *pólis*. Engelbert is typical for the political thinking of his time in taking up the distinction, extending it to include further types of community, and attaching much greater significance to it than did Aristotle.[289]

The addition of the realm to the hierarchy of types of community is common, but the addition of the *gens* seems to be original with Engelbert. As far as I can see, it has not so far struck commentators, though it should have. Nor have they bothered to find out

suos in suis non laedens, alienos iniuste non invadens, pacificus cum vicinis, gratus et gratiosus suis. Engelbert, *De ortu* 8.

[286] Engelbert, *De ortu* 11.

[287] Cf. Aristotle, *Politiká* 1326*a* 15.

[288] *quae virtus duplex est, videlicet iustitia, et potentia: ita quod iustitia potentiam dirigat, et potentia iustitiam in iudicium convertat et defendat: ut iustitia dirigat et decernat, quid sit iustum: potentia vero exequatur, et defendat, id quod iustum est.* Engelbert, *De ortu* 12.

[289] Engelbert, *De ortu* 12. Cf. Aristotle, *Politiká* 1252*b* 20ff.

what motivated Engelbert to focus on the *gens*, though this is crucial for understanding the whole treatise. For Engelbert deduces the role of the empire from the Roman-law concept of *ius gentium*, usually translated as 'law of nations'. Nowadays this is understood as meaning 'international law'. But in Roman law, it is commonly equated with the law of nature. As distinct from man-made law, the law of nature is dictated by human reason and therefore universally applicable, 'law of (all) nations'. Engelbert defines the *gens* as 'a community sharing a common language, a common homeland, and common customs and laws distributed among a multitude of scattered villages and cities'. The *regnum* or realm is defined similarly as a community distributed among various *gentes* but sharing a single king.[290] The definition of the *gens* could be paraphrased as a community sharing a common culture. Engelbert unfortunately fails to illustrate his concept by any concrete example. Antony Black calls the *gentes* 'nations' in English, in keeping with the standard rendering of *ius gentium*, the phrase from which Engelbert derived his theory, as 'law of nations'. But Black no doubt rightly gives as an example of what Engelbert must have meant not today's 'nations' but the *gentes* making up the German realm, like the Saxons and Franks.[291]

Engelbert now asks the central question of his treatise:

> whether is is better for all or most kingdoms in the world to be placed under [the verb is *subsum*] a single kingdom or empire, such as the Roman one, or whether the sundry kingdoms should stand alone under their own kings, as they once did before the Roman empire came into being, and as many of them still do now, established separately under their own kings?[292]

Engelbert answers this by first listing arguments in favour of universal monarchy (chapter 15), then against it (chapter 16); this is followed by further discussion of those arguments. I shall instead present them by focusing in turn on the various issues that he raises.

Like most political thinkers of the period, Engelbert was convinced that monarchy is the best form of government. He points out that monarchy is consistently found in nature, with which the original, perfect kingdoms were in harmony. Both in his discussion of those original kingdoms in chapters 1 and 15, Engelbert cites instances of monarchy among animals (as Aristotle repeatedly does, too). Chapter 1 cites herd animals (such as sheep, cattle, horses, deer, and bees), which are always under the leadership of some particularly big and strong individual. While this seems a plausible illustration of kingship among animals, Engelbert in chapter 1 also cites the lion as king of the wild animals (*ferae*) and the eagle as king of the birds. In chapter 15, by contrast, he only cites the lion and the eagle, and infers: 'Therefore, in the kingdom of men [*in regno hominum*], too, one will be king, and lord of all the rest.' But how can 'the lion', a species rather than an individual, be 'king and lord' of the other animals?

Engelbert is typical of the scholastics in attaching great importance to semantics, to the precise meaning of words. He can hardly have failed to realize that subordination under a lead animal belonging to the same species had a different quality from the 'kingship' of the lion and the eagle over other species. In fact, the former analogy was

[290] *gens tota . . . est communitas unius linguae et patriae, et morum ac legum, per vicos ac civitates distantes a se invicem, et remotas, habens multitudinem hominum segregatam: ita et communitas quinta, est communitas regni, habens per vicos et civitates, et gentes distantes ac remotas, sub uno rege et domino subiectorum multitudinem segregatam.* Engelbert, *De ortu* 12.

[291] Black (1992: 94).

[292] Engelbert, *De ortu* 14.

not applicable to the empire, only to kingship in general: it is surely no accident that it appears in chapter 1, where kingship in general is discussed, but not here, where the topic is whether there should be one supreme kingship. There is more than one herd of cattle in the world and more than one swarm of bees, making this comparison unsuitable to support the idea of a single emperor for all humanity. No animal is subject to the lion or the eagle in the sense of accepting them as their leader. But the lion and the eagle need not fear any animal because no animal would dare oppose them: in that sense they are supreme. The symbolical nature of this supremacy is underlined by its being vested in the species as such, an abstract entity. In somewhat similar fashion, the preamble of the circular announcing the imperial coronation of 1312 establishes an analogy between imperial rule and the rule of man (as a species) over the rest of creation, likewise a symbolical notion.[293]

It is evident that like other political thinkers of the period, Engelbert is not primarily interested in 'political' categories like power, but, at least equally, in cosmology, an order of the world where what is 'right' was defined in metaphysical terms. On the other hand, this metaphysical order could not be totally divorced from practical reality. The empire not only had to be shown to be 'right' metaphysically, but also to have some practical purpose, and indeed Engelbert endeavours to do that. Typically for his time, he takes for granted that within christendom everybody (or nearly so) had a superior. At the same time, the competence of any superior was limited by the inherent autonomy of the individual or community over which he (rarely she) had power or authority—the very opposite of the later doctrine of sovereignty, where one superior has all power and any individual or community under him or her only the power that he or she chooses to give them, always retaining the last word. For Engelbert, a social hierarchy culminating in a single person is dictated by logic and reason. Any ordered collective shows a hierarchical structure, in other words, subordination, at every level, of the many under the fewer, right up to the top where the progressively fewer at last become one. 'Now if this, therefore, ought to be chosen as the best option in the individual realms, then it must likewise be so among the plural kings and realms as a group, with a hierarchy established among them that culminates in one king and lord of all.'[294]

One reason why this must be so is that, as already set forth, the interest (*bonum*) of the individual is subordinated (*ordinatur ad*) to that of the group, and the interest of the smaller group to that of the larger: the interest of the household to that of the village, the interest of the village to that of the city, the interest of the city to that of the *gens*, the interest of the *gens* to that of the kingdom. Such thinking at the time would not have been challenged by anyone. But Engelbert goes further: 'So also the plural kingdoms of the world, and their interest, are subordinated to the one natural kingdom and empire [*sic etiam multa regna mundi, et bonum ipsorum, ordinantur ad unum naturale regnum*

[293] [*Deus*] *qui . . . tanto dignitatis honore . . . hominem quem inter universa creaverat extulit, ut cui imaginem sue divinitatis impresserat, super cuncta que fecit tribueret principatum . . . voluit, ut quemadmodum sub se Deo uno omnes ordines celestium agminum militant, sic universi homines . . . uni principi monarche subessent.* As n. 256.

[294] *in omni ordinata multitudine plura subalternantur paucioribus, donec veniatur ad imum, cui omnia cetera subalternantur tamquam suo primo et principio. . . . Ergo si in singulis regnis hoc est ita eligendum veluti optimum, idcirco et in tota multitudine regum et regnorum sic erit optimum: ut omnium fiat subalternatio, usque ad unum regem et dominum omnium.* Engelbert, *De ortu* 15.

et imperium].'[295] 'The one *natural* kingdom and empire': a remarkable expression that Engelbert simply drops into his text without discussing it—which he tends to do when he is saying something unorthodox. What does he mean here? To be sure, other realms had a right to exist, but individually each of them was dispensable. Not so the empire, which therefore had a higher legitimacy. We must remember that Engelbert regards conformity with nature as a criterion of what is good and right, so to call the empire 'natural' is high praise indeed.

I have not found this idea in other, comparable writings of the period (which is not to say that it cannot be found). It is not one of the standard arguments in the debate about the empire that every defender of the empire was expected to adduce and every opponent was expected to address. The philosophical fashion of the period, unlike that of our own time, did not value original arguments, but the dexterity with which standard arguments were handled; indeed original arguments were frowned upon. This may be one reason why Engelbert does not flag his notion that only the empire was a 'natural' kingdom. On the other hand, he probably did not invent that notion. We saw that in his letter to Moscow, patriarch Antony in the 1390s refers to the ruler in Constantinople, whom he presents as the sole true emperor, as *physikós basileús*, the 'natural' king/emperor. Even though the thinking of the scholastics was to some extent followed in the Greek east, too, it is likely that, independently of each other, Engelbert and Antony drew on an existing notion.

Engelbert associates the concept of empire with the concept of *respublica*. Literally 'the public thing' or 'cause', nowadays this is routinely rendered as 'state'; at the time it either means 'commonwealth' or 'public good' (= 'common weal' in the sense of public welfare). Engelbert quotes Cicero as equating *res publica* with *res populi*, the 'thing/cause of the people', and as defining 'the people' as 'a group of men associated into a single whole by common consent on what is divine and human law [*multitudo hominum communi consensu divini et humani iuris sociata in unum*]'. Engelbert allows the reader to think that this is literally what Cicero wrote and that Augustine, who quotes the passage in question in *De civitate Dei*, approved of it. In reality, Cicero defined 'the people' as 'a group associated by consensus on what is the law, and ties of mutual interest [*coetus multitudinis iuris consensu et utilitatis communione sociatus*]'. And Augustine, in fact, polemically observes that according to this definition the *respublica Romana* was no *respublica* at all, since there could be no law where reverence for the true god was lacking.[296]

Engelbert continues that where there is only one people there can only be one *respublica*, and thus only one ruler. But there is only one true divine law in the world, consisting in veneration (*cultus*) of the true god; and only one true human law, which is law that is in accordance with divine law.

> And there is only one consensus of the people concerning this divine and human law, which is the christian faith, and only one people, the christian people, which by its faith assents to this divine and human law, and hence only one commonwealth of the entire christian people [*una sola respublica totius populi Christiani*]. Therefore by necessity there is only one prince and king

[295] Engelbert, *De ortu* 15.

[296] Cicero, *De re publica* 1.25, quoted Aurelius Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* 19.21; Engelbert, *De ortu* 15.

of this commonwealth, and his task and purpose is to expand and defend the christian faith and the christian people.[297]

It was, apparently, inconceivable for Engelbert that anyone would deny the superiority of monarchy as a form of government or the necessity of a hierarchical social order, for he fails to adduce any counterarguments. Not so here. Engelbert describes the opposing position as follows: According to Cicero, a commonwealth is characterized by a uniform law. But, given the differences between the *gentes*, there could be no single law for them, and thus no single king over them. Adherents of christianity, judaism, and paganism evidently did not form a single people (*populus*), and hence no single commonwealth (*respublica*): there could thus be no single ruler for them all.[298]

The way Engelbert deals with this objection makes clear why he introduced the *gens* as an additional community and why he defines it as he does. The passage is central for his theory of empire.

> Just as the law . . . is distinguished into natural law, which is the common law of all *gentes* [*ius commune omnium gentium*], and positive [i.e. man-made] law [*ius positivum*], which varies in accordance with the diversity of the *gentes*, . . . so, too, the individual *gentes* have individual kings, who govern [*guberno*] each of them in accordance with the laws peculiar to them [*secundum suas leges proprias*] . . . But at the same time, it is not only possible, but necessary and useful that all kingdoms obey [*obedio*] the Roman empire in accordance with natural law, common to all *gentes* and kingdoms, or according to that part of Roman law that can justly and usefully be applied to all *gentes* and kingdoms, to ensure the peace [*pacem et quietem*] which all *gentes* and kingdoms are bound to observe both among themselves and with respect to outsiders, as in the christian kingdoms, and, at a minimum, to ensure that the christian kingdoms are not invaded, or disturbed, by those outsiders, as in the kingdoms of the infidels and pagans, which, in this respect, are bound to defer to the Roman empire [*Romano imperio subesse tenentur*]. For it is not just the law of christians, but also the law of *gentes* [*ius gentium*], and of all human beings in their capacity as such [*ius omnium hominum in quantum homines*], to give each his due and preserve it for him, and not to harm another unjustly [*suum unicuique tribuere et servare, et alterum iniuste non laedere*]. By law [*de iure*] even infidels and pagans can and must be forced by the empire to observe this in their dealings with christian kingdoms.[299]

In other words: every *gens* is to be governed separately *inasmuch* as the diversity of the various *gentes* suggests that it should be so. But at the same time, they ought to be subject to a single supreme power *inasmuch* as they share certain norms. Those norms are provided by natural law, applicable to all men and, as Engelbert sees it, at least partially enshrined in Roman law. Engelbert indicates that within christendom, there are more shared norms than is true of relations between christians and non-christians. But a fundamental right to physical integrity and respect of property exists regardless of religious affiliation. Therefore, in the wider sense the *respublica* is coterminous with humanity, and in a narrower sense with christendom. Christians, Jews, and pagans do form a commonwealth to the extent that the *ius naturale vel gentium* is applicable to them all ('the law of nature or nations': Engelbert employs this expression in chapter 18 of *De ortu*).

[297] Engelbert, *De ortu* 15.
[298] Engelbert, *De ortu* 16.
[299] Engelbert, *De ortu* 18.

The passage makes clear whence Engelbert derived this thinking, and why he introduces the *gens* into the hierarchy of types of community. As a student in the universities of Prague and Padua, he had of course come into contact with Roman law. As mentioned, the Justinianic *Corpus iuris* comprises a beginners' textbook of jurisprudence, the *Institutiones*; a copy of that textbook in the library of Admont abbey contains annotations in Engelbert's hand in the margins.[300] In the *Institutiones*, the following is set forth at the very outset:

> This is what the law prescribes: to live ethically, to do no harm to another, and to give each his due. . . . Civil law and the law of nations [*ius civile vel gentium*] are distinguished thus: all peoples [*populi*] that are governed by laws and customs use in part their own law and in part the law of all mankind [*omnium hominum ius*]. For what each people lays down for itself as its law is peculiar to the citizenry in question [*ipsius proprium civitatis*] and is called civil law [*ius civile*]. But what natural reason lays down among all men [*quod naturalis ratio inter omnes homines constituit*] is observed equally by all peoples and is called the law of nations [*ius gentium*].[301]

The triad *honeste vivere, alterum non laedere*, *suum cuique tribuere*, 'to live ethically, to do no harm to another, and to give each his due', is often alluded to by Engelbert—for example in the quoted definition of a 'happy' realm in chapter 8 of *De ortu*, or in the passage from chapter 16 of *De ortu* quoted a moment ago ('Just as the law . . . ', last sentence but one). In the *Institutiones,* the words *populi* and *gentes* are synonymous; Engelbert distinguishes them. The former is applied by him to the 'christian people' in its entirety (*populus christianus*), the latter to its culturally defined component parts (in other discourse of the period, *gens*, too, is applied to the 'christian' people, for example in the reply, quoted earlier, to the coronation circular of 1312 sent by the English court: *universa gens catholica* 'the whole catholic—i.e. christian—people').

Engelbert seems to be contradicting himself in claiming, on the one hand, that the *ius naturale vel gentium* is the law of all men in their capacity as such, and on the other, that the purpose of the empire is not only to defend christendom, but to expand it. What he probably had in mind was a new crusade, in line with a demand constantly voiced in christendom following the loss, in 1291, of Acre, the last christian stronghold in Palestine. But people in Latin christendom considered christianity to be the ultimate destiny of mankind.[302] If one accepted that premiss, then the conversion of infidels did not infringe 'the law of men in their capacity as such'. We then have the construction that the *ius naturale vel gentium* was in principle applicable to all men, except if there were a conflict between that and Jesus' mandate to bring the christian faith to all men. Since, according to the relevant passage in the gospel, the penalty for not accepting the christian faith was eternal damnation, inflicting violence on the infidels might be the lesser evil and in their ultimate best interest.[303] It is, in fact, more remarkable that Engelbert accords the infidels any rights at all, than that he discriminates in favour of christians.

Since conflict (*discordia et adversitas*) between the kingdoms or *gentes* was always a possibility, 'there must necessarily be some greater and superior [lawful] power [*aliqua*

[300] Codex Admontensis 421; Ubl (2000: 17).
[301] *Institutiones* 1.1–2.
[302] Cf. Gierke (1881: 517).
[303] Mark 16.15–16; cf. Matthew 28.19–20.

potestas maior ac superior], with the authority and capacity to settle it, and to establish and preserve concord among the kingdoms and the various mutually opposed *gentes* [*quae habeat authoritatem et virtutem concordandi, et concordiam ordinandi et conservandi inter regna et gentes diversas ad invicem, et adversas*].' Otherwise, the divine providence would be deficient with regard to the kingdoms of the world, 'and to say or think that would be improper.... Hence, by the working of the divine providence there will necessarily be some single power [*aliqua una potestas*] under which all kingdoms and all *gentes* of the world must by law be placed, with a view to creating and preserving concord among the *gentes* and kingdoms in the entire world.'[304] This view was not universal: Engelbert cites counterarguments. Peace could be observed to obtain even among kingdoms that did not recognize the authority of the empire. Conversely, the peace of the empire itself had always been fragile:

> We shall rarely read in the history books, nor have we seen or heard in our own day [*temporibus modernis*] of any king or emperor of the Romans who has fully achieved that goal [of ensuring world peace] for his time [*pro suo tempore*]; but rather that they were challenged to constant warfare by daily and incessant rebellions of the cities and peoples [*populi*], the princes, *gentes*, and kingdoms... Indeed, from the time of Octavian, the first *augustus*, down to Henry, seventh of that name, who in our time has sat at the helm of the empire as the 97th emperor since Augustus, the majority of the kings and emperors of the Romans have been killed in war or have been treacherously assassinated by the sword or by poison. So it can be seen that from its beginning down to the present day, the empire or realm of the Romans has mostly been a cause of unrest and war for the world, rather than of peace and tranquillity, to the disadvantage both of itself and other principalities and kingdoms.

(It is interesting to note again here that Engelbert expects the empire to succeed—if, and to the extent that, it is able to—not as an institution, but by virtue of its ruler.)[305]

Engelbert responds that it is necessary to distinguish between the happiness of this life and the happiness of the life eternal. The former is always imperfect and unstable. It is the effort that counts: the empire can only be expected to achieve 'what current circumstances permit' (*Tantum autem potest, quantum temporum condicio permittit*).[306] Concerning the other objection, it may well be that kingdoms not subject to the empire are able to live in peace with each other. But this would be preferable in principle only if they could do so durably. In this finite and unstable life that is not possible. Moreover, christendom can only prevail against the infidels 'under a single head of its own [*sub uno suo proprio capite*]'.[307]

Since it is in conformity with nature and has a function that cannot be fulfilled by any other agency, the empire must be willed by god. Indeed, the working of divine providence is apparent in history, in the 'establishment, succession, and continuation [*constitutio et successio et continuatio*]' of lordship over the world: this lordship (simply called *monarchia* here, *monarchia mundi* or *regnum mundi* elsewhere) arose among the Assyrians, then passed to the Chaldeans or (*sive*) Babylonians, then to the Medes and (*et*) Persians, then to the Greeks. The Greeks at last lost it to the Romans: with the

[304] Engelbert, *De ortu* 15.
[305] Engelbert, *De ortu* 16.
[306] Engelbert, *De ortu* 18.
[307] Engelbert, *De ortu* 18.

utmost exactitude Engelbert pinpoints the battle of Áktion (Actium) as the moment of transition, the defeat of queen Kleopátra of Egypt as the last successor of Alexander by Octavian/Augustus (or their proxies, anyway). This evidently corresponds to the four world empires of the standard interpretation of the vision of Daniel, but Engelbert for the moment does not comment on this aspect.[308]

The central question of the treatise Engelbert ultimately answers thus:

> It is better, and more just . . . for all kingdoms and all kings to be placed under [*subsum*], and obey, the one empire and the one christian emperor, to the extent that by law, or by reasonable and longstanding custom each single kingdom is bound to do so, than for each individual kingdom or king to stand alone, without any subjection [*subiectio*] or obedience to the empire, like many heads on the one body of the christian commonwealth [*Christiana respublica*], which is one, the commonwealth of the one christian people [*populus Christianus*], and as such has only one head for all [*unum caput omnium*], unless someone wants to turn that commonwealth and the one christian people into a many-headed monster *[multorum capitum monstrum*].[309]

This can be inferred from four principles:

> Firstly, the example of all nature; secondly, the order of the political community as a whole; thirdly, the oneness of the body of the church and of the entire christian commonwealth; fourthly, the rightness and beauty of the order of the divine providence and grace.

Once again Engelbert drops a curious expression into his text without comment: *tota communitas politica*. The expression *communitas politica* as such derives from Aristotle, who calls *politikḗ koinônía* the community of the *polítai* or citizens of the *pólis*. Engelbert evidently enlarges the concept to include all humanity.[310]

Engelbert, as quoted, asserts that the kings and kingdoms should defer to the empire 'in accordance with natural law, common to all *gentes* and kingdoms, or according to that part of Roman law that can justly and usefully be applied to all *gentes* and kingdoms', or 'to the extent that by law, or by reasonable and long-standing custom each single kingdom is bound to do so.' Clearly, thus, the subordination of the kingdoms to the empire that he calls for is not absolute, and the latter formulation implies that not all kingdoms are subject to the empire to the same extent. Indeed Engelbert enumerates many kingdoms that 'by law' (*de iure*) were no longer subject to the empire: the Spanish kingdoms, France, England, Hungary, the Slavic kingdoms, Bulgaria, 'Greece' (i.e. the empire of Constantinople).[311] In this context Engelbert warns that to be exempt from the jurisdiction of the empire was a privilege of some kingdoms and not a law applicable to all.[312] He reminds the reader of the connection between the end of the empire and the coming of the antichrist. It was not advisable to push *exemptio* (exemption) from

[308] Engelbert, *De ortu* 15.

[309] Engelbert, *De ortu* 18.

[310] *primo ab exemplo universalis naturae, secundo ab ordine totius communitatis politicae, tertio ab unitate corporis Ecclesiae et totius Christianae reipublicae, quarto a rectitudine et pulchritudine ordinis divinae providentiae et gratiae*. Engelbert, *De ortu* 18.

[311] Engelbert, *De ortu* 16; cf. the remarks on secession from the empire in chapters 18 and 23 of *De ortu*.

[312] *privilegia paucorum non faciunt legem communem*. Engelbert, *De ortu* 18.

the empire to the point where it became *peremptio* (destruction) of the empire.[313] Of course the list of exempt kingdoms is quite long already, to say nothing of the fact that, as Engelbert also notes,[314] the empire had long ago lost its overseas (*ultra mare*) possessions in Asia and Africa. This shrinkage needed an explanation, as did the general weakness of the empire.

Engelbert observes that the empire had its heyday under Augustus—which is why Christ was born at that time, with the entire empire at peace. Since then, the empire had constantly gone downhill, nor would it cease to do so while anything was still left of it. As it was, the empire had already lasted longer than any of its three predecessors in the role of a *monarchia mundi* or world monarchy.[315] The reason why the demise of the empire was inescapable was threefold. First, because, as set forth earlier and again at this point, everything decays the more the older it gets. Engelbert does not spell this out, but of course this explains why the (monocratic) empire had its heyday as soon as Augustus had created it. Second, managing any realm required the preservation of peace and justice among its inhabitants[316] and power to be handled responsibly (*potentiam recte gerere*). But in their inconstancy people rather tended to do the opposite of those things: to create discord (*discordia*), to cause injustice or offence (*iniuria*), to resort to arbitrary force (*violentia*). This was especially true of those possessing power of command (*qui sunt in potestatibus et imperiis constituti*), for the greater the things that occupied them, the greater the effect on their minds, positively as well as negatively. Again this was the more true the less time was left before the end of the world: the more time passes, the worse the condition of the world (*cum ipso lapsu temporis labitur mundus*). Like any realm, so against the background of this ever-increasing inconstancy the Roman realm, too, must perish on account of the very instability of its foundation (*ex ipsa sui fundamenti instabilitate*).[317] Third the future demise of the empire could be inferred from biblical prophecies. The last three chapters of the treatise are filled with eschatological speculation, with special reference to the Book of Daniel and the commentary thereon by Saint Jerome, which interprets the Roman empire as the last of the four mentioned by Daniel.[318]

How does Engelbert fit into the political debate of his time?

> The image of the state painted by Engelbert could not be less christian or beholden to the church . . . For Engelbert the state is not founded or hallowed by god. He emphasizes strongly the worldly origin and worldly purpose of the state and of lordship. And he wastes not a word on any primacy of the church, or even some kind of supervision of the church over the activities of the state and its operators.[319]

[313] Engelbert, *De ortu* 18. On the notion of exemption from the empire cf. von der Heydte (1952: 28–35).

[314] Engelbert, *De ortu* 16.

[315] Engelbert, *De ortu* 20.

[316] Cf. on this Engelbert, *De ortu* 19.

[317] Engelbert, *De ortu* 21.

[318] Engelbert, *De ortu* 22–4.

[319] *Das Bild des Staates, das hier gezeichnet wird, ist nichts weniger als christlich oder kirchlich . . . Einen von Gott gesetzten oder von Gott geheiligten Staat kennt* [Engelbert] *nicht. Mit Nachdruck betont er den weltlichen Ursprung und die weltliche Aufgabe des Staates und der Herrschaft. Und mit keinem Wort gedenkt er eines Primats der Kirche oder auch nur einer Aufsicht der Kirche über die Tätigkeit des Staates und seiner Träger.* Menzel (1962: 397), my trans.

This finding by Ottokar Menzel is typical of the superficial treatment of Engelbert in the literature. It displays the usual uncritical recourse to the word 'state'. One really has to believe in the state quite strongly to find it in Engelbert. The political organization that he depicts does not correspond to the state as we know it on any of the plural levels of community of which he speaks. But in fact it would be wrong in the first place to try to take that multilayered organization apart, to identify one of its levels as the location of our 'state'. Rather, human society for Engelbert forms *one* structure where everything is ultimately connected rather than separated—failing to see that means missing what is perhaps his most basic and important point. Engelbert refers to this single political structure as *respublica*, the commonwealth, or as *tota communitas politica*, the political community in its entirety.

It should be underlined that even though Engelbert modifies the definition of *respublica* given by Cicero, he respects its essence. In the original definition, too, the commonwealth is created by the common consent of all those forming part of it. This is very different from today's legal definition of the state as consisting of a people, a territory, and a government. Cicero and, following him, Engelbert, make no mention of either territory or government. The reason for that is, quite simply, that in the experience both of pre-christian Roman society and fourteenth-century western christendom government, the existence of a central supervisory agency, was no precondition of social life. Nor was territory more than a side effect of the fact that the individuals forming a political community had to have a location in space.

It is not quite correct, either, to see the political organization discussed by Engelbert as divorced from the divine. Engelbert does consider the social order of mankind as in principle willed, 'hallowed', by god, even though human weakness makes it imperfect. If the empire has a kind of divine mandate, the same is no doubt also true of the 'lesser kingdoms', which as 'appendices' of the empire nevertheless form part of the whole that it represents (*imperium Romanum, cuius appendicia sunt regna minora, tamquam partes sui totius*).[320] Finally, 'christian' is different from 'beholden to the church'. It would not have occurred to Engelbert to question the christian orientation of the social and political order surrounding him. If in *De ortu* he speaks of a responsibility for the 'christian people' only in the case of the empire, that is explained by his reliance on the hierarchy of types of community characteristic of the political thinking of the scholastics: christendom is a community above the level of the kingdoms, which therefore can look after its interest only imperfectly and partially. Of course it cannot be inferred from this that the kingdoms are conceived of as less christian than the empire.

Engelbert is no agnostic. What, however, Menzel is right to stress is the fact that he is very much a secular political thinker. In that respect he is quite in tune with the enthusiastic aristotelianism of his age. Engelbert implicitly denies any role for the church in the creation and legitimation of secular rule, situating the original, ideal kingdoms in the period prior to the birth of Christ—though it is worth recalling that in doing so he simply follows Aurelius Augustinus, who in turn was recycling the pre-christian historians Iustinus and Trogus.[321] In dealing with the purpose of rule or lordship—happiness, justice, and peace—Engelbert makes no mention of religion. Indeed it is remarkable that in this context Engelbert not only omits any mention of the church, but even of the

[320] Engelbert, *De ortu* 21.
[321] Aurelius Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* 4.6.

christian faith. Rather strikingly for a Benedictine abbot, the social order that Engelbert presents in *De ortu* accommodates the christian faith, but makes no room at all for the church.

In the literature Engelbert is routinely dismissed, if he is mentioned at all. To give just one example, in his Penguin *History of Political Thought: The Middle Ages*, the great Walter Ullmann offers a brief, unsympathetic, and not altogether correct summary of *De ortu*, and derides it as 'a superficial and incongruous argumentation based on slim acquaintance with Aristotle'. This verdict is the more curious because Ullmann goes on to treat Dante and his *Monarchia* at far greater length and in much more positive, indeed glowing terms, opening his discussion of that work with a long panegyric—despite the fact that, as we shall see shortly, Dante employs much the same 'argumentation' as Engelbert. The similarities between Engelbert and Dante are the more striking as almost certainly they had no knowledge of each other. In his much longer treatment of the *Monarchia*, Ullmann stresses point after point (e.g. the determined secularism, the inclusion of all humanity in the purview of the theory) as being original with Dante when it is likewise found in Engelbert.[322]

The tendency to treat Dante more sympathetically is of course partly due to the circumstance that he is far better known and generally admired for his poetry. But another reason is no doubt that whereas Dante writes in an overtly polemical vein that easily engages the attention of the reader, Engelbert on the contrary writes in a manner apparently designed to deflect unwanted superficial attention. As long as one does not read it closely, his text looks quite harmless. Unlike Dante, he never expressly deviates from established, traditional thinking. He modifies it in important respects, but likes to do so between the lines and by omission—one reason for this surely being his position as a high dignitary of the church. Thus, in his entire treatise Engelbert never once speaks of the pope.[323] A present-day reader will hardly notice, but a period reader would not have failed to be astonished and to understand the implicit message. As mentioned, in those years the relationship between pope and emperor was a hotly debated topic. If Engelbert is silent concerning that relationship and fails to discuss what role the pope plays in the empire or with regard to it, it means that no such role is admitted by him.[324]

The same message seems to be implicit in the way in which Engelbert constantly and pointedly speaks of the 'Roman empire or kingdom' (*Romanum imperium sive regnum*). One of the issues in the debate about the relationship between pope and emperor was the nature of the imperial coronation. Did it confer rights that the *king* of Romans as such lacked? The 'empire' in the sense of 'rule by an emperor' presupposed the coronation of the king of Romans by the pope. Until then, the 'empire' was in fact 'only' a *regnum*, a kingship or kingdom, and indeed, as some saw it, a kingdom like any other. If, however, there was no legal difference between the two terms, which is what Engelbert insinuates by constantly equating them, then it did not matter whether the king of Romans was

[322] Ullmann devotes a single paragraph to Engelbert (1965: 186–7) but seven pages to Dante (ibid. pp. 189–95).

[323] Except for a brief allusion in ch. 21, and again in ch. 22, to the Holy See (*apostolica sedes*) as 'spiritual head of of the church' (*caput Ecclesiae in spiritualibus*); the context here is that the faithful will desert the Holy See (as well as the empire) at the coming of the antichrist.

[324] Ullmann curiously claims that according to Engelbert the empire would be a force for peace 'provided that concord between it and the papacy could be established'—when in fact it is a salient feature of *De ortu* that the relationship between the two is not discussed at all.

crowned emperor or not. In line with this, nothing important that Engelbert in *De ortu* says about the empire is specifically linked to the person of the emperor called by that title. Engelbert often speaks of the empire rather than its rulers (but, given his highly personalized conception of politics, it is the rulers that he means). If he has to refer to the rulers of the empire as such, he usually speaks of 'kings or emperors of the Romans' or employs some circumlocution.

The point clearly was to dispense him from having to address the question of whether the prerogatives he attributed to the empire could only be wielded if and when there was an emperor crowned by the pope. And the reason he did not want to address that question must have been that in that case he could not have avoided openly opposing the position of the pope. Depending on the precise date of the treatise that pope may well have been John XXII, whose claim to suzerainty over the empire Engelbert must have resented. But even the kind of attitude towards the empire expressed by a less intransigent incumbent like Clement V in *Pastoralis cura* cannot have been to his liking. Just like the pope, the church as an organization has no role in *De ortu*. Christendom is 'the christian people', *populus christianus*. Where the word *ecclesia* 'church' occurs, it can likewise refer to the totality of the faithful, rather than to the clergy. This is the case for example in the third of the four principles adduced by Engelbert in justification of the empire: 'the oneness of the body of the church [*ecclesia*] and of the entire christian commonwealth'—an allusion to the doctrine of the church as the *corpus mysticum*, the mystical body of Christ.

The way Engelbert handles Aristotle is likewise marked by his predilection for what could be called argument by insinuation. Aristotle makes no mention of any community above the level of the *pólis*. But (as we shall see in more detail in Chapter 4) so great an authority as Thomas Aquinas does, followed by his highly influential pupil Giles of Rome: both add the *regnum* or kingdom to the hierarchy of types of community. So Engelbert felt free not only to add the kingdom, too, as well as the *gens*, situated between the city and the kingdom, but, like Thomas and Giles, to attribute this entire extended hierarchy to Aristotle. From today's perspective, it may appear unimportant whether the entire hierarchy or only part of it was already found in Aristotle. But for the scholastics it was so important to be able to present their arguments as covered by the *auctoritates* or 'authorities', such as Aristotle, that on occasion they did not hesitate to stretch the truth somewhat. Engelbert invokes the 'authorities' in apparent support of a point he is making even if a reader who bothered to check his quotations would discover that they were saying something rather different or even disagreed with him. Thus, as we saw, Engelbert indicates Augustine as his source for Cicero's definition of *respublica* while omitting to point out that Augustine explicitly distances himself from it; moreover Engelbert modifies Cicero's actual formulation while allowing the reader to think that he is quoting the original.

No recognized authors had as yet extended the hierarchy of types of community still further to include humanity, so Engelbert abstains from doing so explicitly lest he appear too obviously as an innovator; moreover, there was a problem here in that all of humanity was not christian. But Engelbert cleverly adduces a passage in Augustine that only distinguishes as 'levels of human community [*gradus societatis humanae*]' the house (*domus*), the city (*urbs*), and the world (*orbis terrae*)[325]—a triad that interestingly leaves no room for anything akin to today's state, presumably because Augustine saw

[325] Aurelius Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* 19.7; cf. Engelbert, *De ortu* 12.

a kingdom as a lordship, not as a community. If, for the scholastics, any of the (non-biblical) 'authorities' had as much weight as Aristotle, it was Augustine. So even though it might appear as a daring innovation to call mankind a political community, seeing that neither Aristotle nor any of his prestigious recent commentators had done so, being able to point out that Augustine had done precisely this carried much weight. At the same time, it is entirely characteristic of Engelbert simply to use the passage in the appropriate context but without actually formulating the objection that it is presumably intended to forestall.

Curiously, Engelbert, unlike Dante in the *Monarchia*, almost never cites the bible, the only conspicuous biblical quotation in the bulk of the treatise somewhat predictably being Matthew 21.22: 'Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's.' Only the last three chapters of *De ortu*, on eschatology, feature numerous biblical references.

3.4.6 Dante Alighieri

Among the more vociferous supporters of Henry VII in Italy was a Florentine poet deeply unhappy about the anti-imperial stance of his home city (having been condemned to death in his absence when a rival faction came to power there, he was never to return). He took up the cause of the emperor-to-be in a number of open letters written in Latin. Addressing the magnates and the people of Italy, 'the humble Italian and Florentine, Dante Alighieri' (1265–1321) urged them to seize the chance to overcome their divisions. Using the image of the bridegroom that occurs in several places in the bible, Dante implicitly equates Henry with Christ.

> Rejoice now, oh wretched Italy . . . , for your bridegroom, the comfort of the world and the glory of your people [*mundi solatium et gloria plebis tue*], the most gracious Henry, divine [*divus*] *augustus* and *caesar*, is hastening to your wedding. Dry your tears and wipe off the traces of your grief, oh most beautiful one, for he is near who will liberate you from the prison of the godless.[326]

The 'most heinous [*scelestissimi*] people of Florence' found themselves reminded that 'the pious providence of the everlasting king [of the heavens] . . . has ordained the most holy [*sacrosanctum*] Roman empire to govern [*guberno*] human affairs,' and berated for their blindness and covetousness that led them to break 'divine and human law' and to reject 'the Roman prince, king of the world and servant of god [*Romanus princeps, mundi rex et Dei minister*]'.[327]

Dante also addressed Henry himself:

> To the most holy, glorious, and successful *triumphator* and lord, the incomparable lord Henry, by the grace of god king of Romans and ever *augustus*, his most devoted followers Dante Alighieri of Florence, unjustly exiled, and with him all those in Tuscany who wish for peace: we kiss the ground before your feet.

Dante goes on to refer to Henry as 'the successor of Caesar and Augustus', 'he whom the whole world is expecting', 'the world's only protector [*preses unice mundi*]'. He chides

[326] Dante Alighieri, Letters 5.2 (quoted from the edn. Dante 1960). *divus* in the pre-christian empire was a common enough epithet for its rulers, but only after their death!

[327] Dante, Letters 6.1–2.

the king for lingering in Lombardy and urges him not to be intimidated by the Tuscan opposition. In this context, Dante perhaps somewhat ominously compares Henry to David in his fight against Goliath. But he also goes much further when again he likens the king to the Messiah. That Henry appeared to hesitate to press on for Rome 'compels us to entertain doubt and to join in the words of the precursor [i.e. John the Baptist, Matthew 11.3], "Are you he that should come, or do we look for another?" ' But, borrowing biblical phrases featured in the liturgy of the vespers (evensong) and the eucharist, Dante quickly reassures Henry that

> nevertheless in you we put our faith and our hope, acknowledging you as a servant of god, a son of the church, and a promoter of Roman glory [*Romane glorie promotorem*]. For I myself . . . saw you to be most kind, and heard you to be most gracious, as befits the majesty of an emperor, when my hands touched your feet and my lips rendered their due. Then my spirit rejoiced in you [an allusion to the *Magnificat*, Luke 1.46ff.: 'my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour'], and I silently said to myself: Behold the lamb of God, behold him who taketh away the sins of the world [this is John the Baptist acknowledging Jesus as the Messiah, according to John 1.29] [*velut decet imperatoriam maiestatem benignissimum vidi et clementissimum te audivi, cum pedes tuos manus mee tractarunt et labia mea debitum persolverunt. Tunc exultavit in te spiritus meus, cum tacitus dixi mecum: 'Ecce Agnus Dei, ecce qui tollit peccata mundi'*].

The kissing of feet—or the ground on which they tread—twice referred to in this letter was a sign of extreme reverence, which (if I am not mistaken) was not usually offered to secular rulers but to the pope—thus, eight years later the senders of the declaration of Arbroath likewise greet its addressee, pope John XXII, with 'devout kisses to his blessed feet', and the same formula is employed in the slightly earlier 'Remonstrance of the Irish princes', addressed to the same pope. Such gestures towards the emperor-to-be tie in with the evident intention of the letter to depict him as a sacred figure on a par with the pope.[328]

In Canto VI of the *Paradiso* Dante celebrates the Roman empire as a manifestation of god's will. The Roman eagle, which Dante depicts as flying through history and passing in review the great Roman past, is the bird of god (*l'uccel di Dio*); the world is governed in the shadow of its sacred feathers (*sotto l'ombra de le sacre penne*). Constantine I as it were 'abducts' it to Byzántion, but Charles I, victorious under its wings (*sotto le sue ali/Carlo Magno, vincendo . . .*), restores it to Rome.[329] The end of Canto VI laments the lack of respect for the Roman eagle on the part of the warring parties of Italy. Canto XXX, in its vision of paradise, reserves a place there for the soul of 'the august Henry, who [came] to raise up Italy ere she [was] ready [*l'alto Arrigo, che a drizzar l'Italia/verrà in prima ch'ella sia disposta*]'. Unfortunately, blind covetousness (*cieca cupidigia*) makes the Italians behave like a little child that pushes away the nurse even though it is starving.[330] Dante had expressed himself in similar fashion in addressing the people of Florence, comparing them to prisoners who reject the one who wishes to free them from their chains. Blind covetousness makes them follow the 'law of sin' rather than those 'most sacred laws that imitate the vision of natural justice'. One wonders what exactly Dante meant by 'covetousness' and whether what he had in mind perhaps

[328] Dante, Letters 7.
[329] Dante, *Paradiso* 6.4, 6.7, 6.95–6 (quoted after the edn. Dante 1983).
[330] Dante, *Paradiso* 30.137ff.

corresponded to what now might be called '(egotistical) self-interest, egotism'—in his *Monarchia* he asserts that 'covetousness is always opposed to the public good'.[331]

Already in the first years of his exile, probably between 1304 and 1307, Dante in his *Convivio* had produced a short defence of the empire in Italian—at a time, that is, when no one could foresee that within a few years Henry of Luxemburg would become the first emperor to be crowned in living memory.[332] Ideas from the *Convivio* reappear in the more comprehensive discussion of the empire that goes under the title *Monarchia*. Like other apologists of the empire, Dante employs the expression *monarchia* as a synonym for *imperium*—which, as he himself concedes, is the more common designation. This preference for the more rarified expression is in itself characteristic of the rebellious attitude permeating the treatise.[333]

The date of composition of the *Monarchia* has long been a subject of debate. It seems more likely that it was written after 1312, when Henry appeared in Italy, than before. Indeed it is a plausible assumption that the events of 1312–13 motivated Dante to write this treatise. Once the *Monarchia* refers to the *Paradiso*,[334] which, as we just saw, was written when Henry was already dead. Most commentators now think that this reference was really put there by Dante himself and not by some later copyist. On the other hand, it cannot be ruled out that the relevant phrase, although by Dante himself, was only inserted years after the main text had been written.[335]

The treatise is divided into three books, which furnish proof, respectively, that the *monarchia* or empire is necessary in principle, that the Roman empire as the current historical manifestation of the *monarchia* is legitimate, and that the Roman empire is strictly independent of the pope. In line with the general approach of this chapter, only the first two books will be discussed in detail here. The three books in turn consist of numerous separate arguments, deduced from what Dante held to be unchallengeable premisses. The recourse to formal logic was intended to give the treatise 'scientific' status. It is rather overdone, and perhaps overcompensates an inferiority complex that Dante harboured because (unlike Engelbert or Pierre Dubois) he had received no formal academic training.[336]

The somewhat hubristic tone of the treatise may likewise mask an underlying self-doubt. At the outset, Dante announces his intention to reveal truths that no one else had

[331] *Nec advertitis dominantem cupidinem, quia ceci estis, . . . captivantem vos in lege peccati, ac sacratissimis legibus que iustitie naturalis imitantur ymaginem, parere vetantem.* Letters 6.5. Cf. *Monarchia* 2.5.5: *cupiditas . . . que rei publice semper adversa est.* That *res publica* here means 'public good' will be argued in discussing the relevant passage further on.

[332] Dante, *Convivio* 4.4–6 (1960: 236–43); cf. Imbach and Flüeler, introduction to Dante (1989: 15–25); Passerin d'Entrèves (1952: 26–41).

[333] [*monarchia temporalis*,] *que comuniori vocabulo nuncupatur imperium.* Dante, *Monarchia* 1.5.1. I have used the edn. by Ruedi Imbach and Christoph Flüeler (Dante 1989); the English trans. is my own. Alphons Lhotsky (1970: 110) has claimed that equating *monarchia* and *imperium* was original with Dante. However, it is not only found in later authors who may or may not have read Dante, but also in Engelbert, who almost certainly had not and was writing at roughly the same time (Engelbert in ch. 16 of *De ortu* speaks of the *imperium* as the *regnum monarchiae*, and in ch. 17 simply as *monarchia*; both ch. 5 and ch. 20 refer to it as *monarchia mundi*).

[334] Dante, *Monarchia* 1.12.6.

[335] On the problem of dating the *Monarchia*, see e.g. Davis (1957: appendix 2); Davis (1998); Diotti (1977: 73–9); Kay in Dante (1998: xx–xxxi).

[336] Imbach and Flüeler, Introduction to Dante (1989: 13–14 u. ff.); Maurer (1989).

dared try their hand at (*intemptatas ab aliis ostendere veritates*).[337] Dante asserts that no one before him had dealt with the subject of the *temporalis monarchia.*[338] Indeed this is true of those 'authorities' on whom he principally bases himself: Aristotle, Augustine, and Thomas Aquinas. None of them had addressed the question of universal monarchy. Aristotle and Thomas never mention the subject (it has often been remarked that the word *imperator* 'emperor' occurs nowhere in Thomas' writings). Augustine is somewhat ambivalent about the Roman empire and in any case only devotes scattered, improvised remarks to it, not a coherent discussion.[339]

Of course Dante was not the first to write on the empire. But the novelty of his approach also consisted in conceiving of the empire as *temporalis monarchia*, with the emphasis on *temporalis* 'temporal'. Dante provides an etymological gloss on this expression: he means 'lordship . . . over all those in time [i.e. alive: the dead are in eternity], or in and over that which is measured through time [*principatus . . . super omnes in tempore vel in hiis et super hiis que tempore mensurantur*]'.[340] This gloss makes clear why the Latin word *temporalis* (and, as a result, its English equivalent 'temporal') took on the meaning 'secular' (as opposed to spiritual, that is, ecclesiastical: hence the expression 'lords spiritual and temporal' for the bishops and other members of the British House of Lords). What Dante is seeking to do here is delimit an exclusive sphere of competence for the empire. Everything 'temporal' is for the empire to deal with; everything to do with eternity is the domain of the church. The upshot is that the empire is entirely secular and as such unconnected with, let alone dependent on, the church. For Dante, the two should not interfere with each other.

The affinity with Engelbert is readily apparent. Both authors reflect a body of thought on which (most probably) they drew independently. One difference between them is that Dante does not hesitate to innovate openly. Unlike Engelbert, he expressly extends the hierarchy of types of community to include the human race (*humanum genus*), which he lists as the greatest and highest community above the household, the village, the city, and the kingdom. Since the greater community takes precedence over the smaller, the human race is the most important community of all. Aristotle reasoned that

> Nature . . . does nothing in vain . . . the whole [Aristotle is talking specifically about the human body, which he compares with the *pólis*] must necessarily be prior to the part; since when the whole is destroyed, foot or hand will not exist except as a word . . . all things are defined by their purpose and capacity . . . It is clear therefore that the *pólis* is also prior by nature to the individual; for if each individual when separate is not self-sufficient, he must be related to the *pólis* as other parts are to their whole.

Borrowing from Aristotle (but, curiously, without crediting him here), Dante generalizes this notion. For him what is true of the relationship between the individual and the city is true of the relationship between the individual, or any lesser community, and the greater community and thus ultimately mankind: 'God and nature', says Dante, 'does [*sic*] nothing in vain, but whatever he [she, it] brings forth is for some purpose.' Thus the thumb has its purpose, as does the hand, as does the arm; the same is true of the

[337] Dante, *Monarchia* 1.1.3.
[338] Dante, *Monarchia* 1.1.5.
[339] Gilson (1953: 172); Löwe (1960: 545–6).
[340] Dante, *Monarchia* 1.2.2; cf. Löwe (1960: 545–6).

household, the village, the city, and the kingdom. They all serve the whole of which they are part: the thumb, hand, and arm serve the human body, the household, village, city, and kingdom serve mankind. The Latin word employed by Dante for 'purpose' is *operatio*, the equivalent of Greek *érgon* in Aristotle. The purpose or task of humanity, according to Dante, is the optimal development of its capacity of understanding—in Latin he calls that *potentia sive virtus intellectiva*, where *potentia* 'capacity' serves as the equivalent of Greek *dýnamis* and *virtus* 'virtue, excellence' of Greek *aretê*. The latter in Greek philosophy (e.g. Aristotle) often signifies a (positive) property either unique to that which possesses it, or at which at any rate it excels.[341]

Dante explains that understanding is the property unique to mankind, and in this context cites the Arab philosopher Averroes (Ibn Rushd, 1126–98). Popular in christendom at this time as a commentator on Aristotle, Averroes had put forth the idea that all of humanity shared a single soul, a notion considered heretical by the church. The reference to Averroes later helped justify the condemnation of the *Monarchia* by the church, even though Dante no doubt shared the christian doctrine that each individual has his or her own soul. However, the general notion of mankind as a community of understanding evidently appealed to Dante: no individual, nor indeed any lesser community, can understand everything. Perfect understanding is something to which only humanity as a whole can aspire. Dante maintains further that in order to fulfil its purpose or task of ever more perfect understanding, mankind requires peace. This latter proposition is not fleshed out very thoroughly. We are told, among other things, that it is as true of mankind as a whole as of any individual that it 'gains perfection of prudence and wisdom by sitting and being at rest',[342] and that the angels appearing to the sheperds in the night when Jesus was born did not announce riches or fame or health to them, but peace.[343]

The remainder of the first book seeks to demonstrate the necessity of the *monarchia*. This is derived first of all from the principle of *ordinatio ad unum* (where *unum* may actually mean 'one man' as well as 'one thing'). To fulfil its purpose every community needs a leader, or rather 'one leader': Dante always employs the word *unum* 'one' (accusative), which puts some stress on the fact of a single leader, even if in the Latin of the period (similar in this respect to the present-day Romance and Germanic languages as well as present-day Greek) the numeral 'one' also routinely functions as an indefinite article replacing the *aliquis* of 'classical' Latin. Thus, the household needs 'one who regulates and directs [*unum qui regulet et regat*]', the village needs 'one who regulates [*unum regulatorem*]', and the kingdom needs 'one king [*unum regem*]'. Concerning the city, Dante tells us that it needs 'one leadership [*unum regimen*]', which is really a semantic trick to get round the fact that the kind of city to which Dante was accustomed (like Florence) was not under the leadership of a single person, but governed collectively. One wonders how he would have answered the objection that even Rome under the rule of the senate was far from having 'one leader'—perhaps in similar fashion. As it is, Dante concludes that what is (supposedly) true of every other type of community must likewise be true of mankind: if every community is subordinated to one leader (*ordinatur ad*

[341] Aristotle *Politiká* 1253*a* 9ff. (1944: 11; modified); Dante, *Monarchia* 1.3.
[342] Dante, *Monarchia* 1.4.2; commentators see a parallel with Aristotle, *Physikê akróasis* 247*b* 10–11.
[343] Dante, *Monarchia* 1.4.3; cf. Luke 2.13.

unum), then mankind is, too. Therefore, it, too, must have 'one who regulates and directs [*unum regulans sive regens*], and this person must be called *monarcha* or *imperator*'.[344]

Dante adds further arguments, for example drawing the usual comparison with god, sole leader of the creation.[345] For Dante, moreover, the emperor is the necessary guarantor of peace and justice—two concepts habitually linked in the political discourse of the period and dealt with in successive chapters of the treatise. The proof that the emperor is necessary for the peace of mankind is furnished by means of the kind of formal logic favoured by Dante:

> Between two rulers [*principes*], neither of whom is subject to the other in any way, a quarrel [*litigium*] can arise . . . Hence a sentence [*iudicium*] is necessary. And since neither can hear a case [*cognosco*] against the other—for he has no power of command over someone who is his equal [*par in parem non habet imperium*]—a third person with higher jurisdiction is needed [*oportet esse tertium iurisdictionis amplioris*] . . . This third person is either the *monarcha* [emperor] or not. If he is, then the proposition is proved. If not, then this third person again has someone who is his equal and outside his jurisdiction. In this case a new third person is needed. Either, then, we have an infinite regress [*processus in infinitum*], which is not possible, or we must reach the first and highest judge . . . And this will be the *monarcha* or *imperator*. The *monarchia* is thus necessary for the world.[346]

(It is noteworthy that Dante employs legal terminology throughout here, as if to show off his knowledge of Roman law.)

Concerning justice, Dante observes[347] that the more powerful justice is, the better it is for the world; but it is most powerful (*potissima*) under the *monarcha*. Dante does not deduce this from the power of the *monarcha* as such. For him, justice is powerful all by itself, not because of the power of its guardian. This is because in the case of the *monarcha* it is untainted by self-interest. Unlike other rulers (*principes alii*), the *monarcha* has nothing that he could still aspire to, since his jurisdiction is already limited only by the ocean (which in the worldview of the period surrounded the inhabited earth).[348] Antony Black, with some justification, calls this reasoning 'absurd'.[349] Dante is only thinking of the *outer* limit of this jurisdiction, which cannot be pushed any further. But what about the internal limit: Dante says nothing about the respective prerogatives of the *monarcha* and of the 'other rulers'. Why should the *monarcha* not be jealous of those other rulers? Why not try to suppress them? Unlike Engelbert, Dante seems to ignore the problem of power. Whereas Engelbert insists that justice has to be supported by power, for Dante this is not a consideration. He does not deal with the question of what happens if the other rulers fail to accept the jurisdiction of the *monarcha* voluntarily—just as in the passage on peace quoted a moment ago, Dante by his choice of terminology casts the problem of conflict between rulers as a purely legal one, to be solved by legal procedures.

Yet it is worth considering whether in the context of his own society Dante was quite so naive as he seems. If he fails to ponder the question whether the *monarcha* might not seek to get rid of lesser rulers altogether, the explanation probably is that in the

[344] Dante, *Monarchia* 1.5.9.
[345] Dante, *Monarchia* 1.9.
[346] Dante, *Monarchia* 1.10.
[347] Dante, *Monarchia* 1.11.
[348] *sua nanque iurisdictio terminatur Oceano solum*. Dante, *Monarchia* 1.11.12.
[349] Black (1992: 98).

early fourteenth century the means at the disposal of rulers to control a large territory were so limited as to exclude any possibility of direct administration by the central power. We shall see in Chapter 4 how, in the late pre-Reformation period, the process of monetization began to change this situation. But its effects were only starting to make themselves felt in the fifteenth century, and as we shall see even eighteenth-century rulers were barely capable of exercising effective control over their subjects in their entirety. Fourteenth-century kings could try to get the magnates, and the minor lords, of their realm to defer to them, but could not hope to deprive them of their autonomy entirely. Kings could not possibly have run a realm themselves, by means of administrators taking orders from them: for one thing, the money to pay such administrators was not there yet, while giving them land would once again have turned them into largely autonomous magnates. We saw that Engelbert does not discuss the institutional set-up of the empire, or of kingdoms in general: there was nothing to discuss because rulers did not have the power to change the existing structures substantially. If Dante fails to discuss the status of lesser rulers within christendom, it is probably for much the same reason.

The fact that the *monarcha* does not taint justice with the negative admixture of self-interest is one reason why according to Dante his justice is more powerful. The other is that, more so than other rulers, he enhances it with the positive admixture of love (*dilectio*). For the *monarcha* has greater love for mankind:

> The more a cause is universal, the more it is to be considered a cause, since a subordinate is only a cause through his superior . . . And the more a cause is a cause, the more love it has for its effect . . . Since among mortals the *monarcha* is the most universal cause that men live well, other rulers . . . being a cause only through him, it follows that he has the most love for the good of mankind.[350]

The notion that men in community should 'live well' (*bene vivere* = *eu zên*) is another borrowing from Aristotle, who defines this as the goal of the *pólis* without being very explicit as to what, concretely, he means—although he makes clear that 'well' is not to be understood in material or utilitarian terms.[351]

To peace and justice Dante adds freedom, discussed immediately after the other two. 'Only under the rule of the *monarcha* [*imperante monarcha*] does the human race exist solely for its own sake and not for the sake of another.'[352] This is because only the *monarcha* is capable of preventing other rulers from pursuing their self-interest. Dante says nothing about why the *monarcha* himself should be free of self-interest, but the answer is presumably to be sought in his greater love for humanity and the absence of ambition caused by the supposed lack of any further goal that he might aspire to. It is a notion peculiar to Latin christendom and alien to pre-christian Greek and Roman society that rulers should be the servants of their subjects; we shall return to this important aspect of christian political thinking in Chapter 4. Engelbert insists that

[350] Dante, *Monarchia* 1.11.17–18.

[351] Aristotle, *Politiká* 1252*b* 31; cf. 1280*a* 32, 1280*b* 34, 1328*a* 37. *eu zên* is defined negatively as not just a community of purpose, such as mutual assistance in war (*symmachía*), wealth (*ktḗmata*), or 'trade, and business relations' (*hai allagaí kai hê chrḗsis hê pros allḗlous*). Instead, *eu zên* is associated rather loosely with terms like *eudaimonía* (happiness), virtue (*aretḗ*), free will (*proaíresis*), friendship (*philía*); all of them hard to assign any very precise meaning.

[352] Dante, *Monarchia* 1.12.9.

'in the natural order of things the king exists for the sake of the kingdom and not the other way around.'[353] Dante makes the same point:

> The citizens do not exist for the sake of the consuls and the people [*gens*] does not exist for the sake of the king, but rather the consuls exist for the sake of the citizens and the king for the sake of the people ... Even though the consul or the king are lords of the rest with respect to the path [*respectu vie*], they are servants of the rest with respect to the goal [*respectu termini*], but especially the *monarcha*, whom we obviously must consider the servant of all [*minister omnium*].[354]

But what, concretely, is the role of the *monarcha*, and what is his relationship with the 'other rulers'? Like other contemporary defenders of the empire, Dante is vague on this—probably because, as indicated, political structures were not then perceived as particularly malleable. Readers probably took for granted that the relationship between other rulers and the *monarcha* was (or ought to be) no different in principle from the relationship, within individual kingdoms, between the crown and the magnates of the realm. Dante merely says this on the subject:

> The statement [made earlier in the same chapter] that the human race can be ruled by a single supreme ruler [*regi per unum suppremum principem*] does not mean that the smallest decisions of each municipality can come directly from this single person [*ut minima iudicia cuiuscunque municipii ab illo uno immediate prodire possint*] ... For nations [*nationes*], kingdoms, and cities have domestic peculiarities [*intra se proprietates*] which it is necessary to regulate [*oportet regulari*] by different laws.... Rather, the statement means that the human race should be ruled by him with respect to those things that it shares in common, that concern everybody [*secundum sua comunia, que omnibus competunt*], and that it should be governed in accordance with a common rule so as to maintain peace [*ut ... comuni regula gubernetur ad pacem*]. It is this rule or law that the separate rulers [*particulares principes*] ought to receive from him.[355]

Dante omits to elaborate on 'this rule or law' handed down by the *monarcha*. The idea that the law may vary locally, but that at the same time certain interests and norms are common to all men and that those are the area of responsibility of the emperor, is similar to the concept of empire as put forward by Engelbert. The notion that any given local subset of christendom might, indeed should have its own local law is not peculiar to Engelbert or Dante but a commonplace of the period.[356]

Dante concludes the first book of his treatise—on the necessity of the empire in general—by pointing to the Roman empire under Augustus, when, given a 'perfect' empire (*existente monarchia perfecta*), 'the human race was happy in the tranquillity of universal peace ...; indeed Paul described that most happy state as the fullness of time.'[357] The birth of Christ at this particular time is presented as proof that this was the ideal state of the world as desired by god.[358]

The second book of the treatise seeks to demonstrate that the Roman empire was the rightful current manifestation of the *monarchia*. As with Engelbert, and entirely in line

[353] *ordine naturali rex propter regnum, et non e contra*. Engelbert, *De ortu* 19.
[354] Dante, *Monarchia* 1.12.11–12.
[355] Dante, *Monarchia* 1.14.4–5 and 7.
[356] Black (1992: 111–12).
[357] Dante, *Monarchia* 1.16.1–2.
[358] Dante, *Monarchia* 1.16.1.

with what the age took for granted, the notion that the Roman imperial dignity of his own day simply continued that established by Augustus is not even discussed by Dante. Strikingly, but in line with a legalist bent evident elsewhere in the treatise, rather than the legitimacy of the Roman empire Dante seeks to establish its lawfulness. He explains that the law is, in fact, the will of god: 'to ask if something is done lawfully is nothing other than to ask whether it is in accordance with what god wants.'[359] Among the various arguments adduced by Dante for the lawfulness of the Roman empire, two are culled from christian doctrine and again take up the notion that the birth of Christ in the reign of Augustus meant divine approval of that reign and the Roman empire in general. This notion as such was common enough at the time. But its presentation no doubt appeared somewhat unusual, as Dante is wearing his logician's coat: 'If the Roman empire did not exist lawfully, then Christ by being born would have expressed something unlawful. The inference is wrong. Therefore the contrary of the initial statement is right.'[360]

Dante tops that with another, similar thought: 'If the Roman empire did not exist lawfully, then Adam's sin has not been punished in Christ [*si Romanum imperium de iure non fuit, peccatum Ade in Cristo non fuit punitum*].' But, Dante explains, the concept of 'punishment' (*punitio*) presupposes lawful jurisdiction on the part of the punisher, otherwise it would not be a punishment but rather an injustice or act of violence (*iniuria*: the Latin means both). The inference that Adam's sin has not been punished is wrong. It necessarily follows that Pontius Pilate, who sentenced Jesus, must have been his lawful judge, and that the Roman empire, which he represented, was also lawful.[361] In the late fifteenth century, this reasoning was condemned by one critic as 'most unusual' (*tam inusitatum dogma*) and unworthy of a great scholar (*tantus doctor*),[362] showing that participants in philosophical or theological debate were not expected to come up with 'new' arguments. The Dominican friar Guido Vernani, in his refutation of the *Monarchia* of about 1329, was particularly incensed by this reasoning, observing that Adam's sin, that is, original sin, could not possibly be subject to human jurisdiction anyway.[363] However, similar reasoning had in fact already been employed a generation before Dante by Jordanus of Osnabrück:

> When Pilate boasted of his power over Christ and said to him: 'Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?' the lord answered him, as John [19.10–11] says: 'Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above.'

Like Dante, Jordanus interprets this as another manifestation of divine approval for the Roman empire.[364]

Those two christian arguments for the lawfulness of the Roman empire are preceded by a number of secular ones. Dante asserts that being the 'most noble people [*populus nobilissimus*]' the Romans were superior to any other people—the proof consisting in a list of forbears of the Romans, including of course Priam of Troy and Aeneas, whose nobility

[359] Dante, *Monarchia* 2.2.6.

[360] *si romanum Imperium de iure non fuit, Cristus nascendo persuasit iniustum; consequens est falsum: ergo contradictorium antecedentis est verum.* Dante, *Monarchia* 2.10.4.

[361] Dante, *Monarchia* 2.11.

[362] Heinricus Institoris in his 1499 rebuttal of the *Monarchia* of Antonio Roselli, much of which is lifted from Dante; quoted Cheneval (1995: 337).

[363] See the commentary on this passage by Richard Kay in Dante (1998: 191–2, n. 15).

[364] Jordanus, *Tractatus super Romano imperio* 7; cf. Davis (1957: 65–7).

(defined with Aristotle as 'virtue and ancient wealth') for Dante required no further demonstration.[365] Since the will of god was manifested by miracles, Dante adduces miracles from Roman history—such as the geese on Capitol hill warning the defenders of the Gauls climbing the unwatched rock face under cover of night (390 BCE). Dante dramatizes this event by attributing the warning to 'a goose never before seen there' (as if geese could readily be told apart), whereas Livy, whom Dante cites as a source, in fact speaks of 'geese sacred to Juno' and hence presumably kept on the hill permanently. As Dante himself notes, the Gauls had already captured the rest of the city, and Augustine actually adduces the same episode as proof that the old Roman deities evidently did not protect the city, or they would not have allowed the Gauls to get that far.[366]

Dante further explains that to seek the public good (*bonum rei publice*) means acting lawfully. In Latin christendom, *res publica* often means not 'commonwealth' but simply 'the common good'—for example, the English *Boke of noblesse* of about 1449 renders *res publica* as 'common profit'.[367] If we adopt the translation of *res publica* offered by the *Boke of noblesse*, then *bonum rei publice* literally means 'the good (or: interest) of the common profit', which is of course a pleonasm. But such semantic redundancy is not at all untypical of the Latin of the period or of the *Monarchia* (or of later political discourse: cf. for example the expression 'people's democracy' in twentieth-century Soviet parlance). The context makes clear that by *res publica* Dante, too, means the public good or interest and not the (Roman) commonwealth.

> That the Roman people in subjecting the world to itself was seeking the public good is evident from its deeds, by which this holy, pious, and glorious people is shown to have neglected its own advantage and cared only for the welfare of all mankind, having put aside all covetousness, which is always opposed to the public good, and acting out of love for the peace and freedom of all.[368]

Dante calls Cicero as a witness on this point—quoting for example *De officiis* 2.26–7, where Cicero praises the selflessness of Roman foreign policy.[369]

Basing himself on Aristotle, Dante holds that, like certain individuals, so certain peoples are by nature destined to rule. But according to Dante, the divine order of the world would lack perfection if one people were not destined to rule over all the other peoples—the basic notion here, also propounded by Engelbert and akin to the concept of *ordinatio ad unum*, being that once you accept that any social order is hierarchical, then in logic you must have a single unit at the top and not several. Of course, the people destined to rule the other peoples can only be the Roman people, as the remainder of the second book of the treatise shows.[370]

[365] Dante, *Monarchia* 2.3.4, cf. Aristotle, *Politiká* 1294*a* 23.

[366] Dante, *Monarchia* 2.4.7; Livy 5.47; Aurelius Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* 2.22; see also the commentary on this passage by Kay in Dante (1998: 119, n. 11).

[367] Lockwood (1997: xxi).

[368] *Quod autem romanus populus bonum prefatum* [=*bonum rei publice*] *intenderit subiciendo sibi orbem terrarum, gesta sua declarant, in quibus, omni cupiditate summota que rei publice semper adversa est, et universali pace cum libertate dilecta, populus ille sanctus pius et gloriosus propria commoda neglexisse videtur, ut publica pro salute humani generis procuraret.* Dante, *Monarchia* 2.5.5.

[369] Dante, *Monarchia* 2.5.18.

[370] Dante, *Monarchia* 2.6.

Another way for the will of god to manifest itself was in combat, since god evidently supported the victor. 'Hence of all the peoples that have fought to rule the world [*pro imperio mundi*], the people that has prevailed has done so by a divine decision [*de divino iudicio*; legal parlance again].'[371] Other contenders had not attained the goal of world empire—Dante enumerates Assyrian, Persian, Macedonian, and Egyptian rulers; interestingly, the list does not square with the traditional notion of the four world empires, which ignored Egypt. If the law was the will of god, and at the same time the will of god was manifest in outcomes, then evidently the Roman empire was lawful. It is curious that, unlike Engelbert, Dante fails to address the current weakness of the empire, since one would expect reversals suffered by the empire to reflect the will of god just as much as success.

It is still more true of Dante than of Engelbert that his concept of empire is entirely secular. 'As the church has its foundation, so does the empire [*imperium*]. For the foundation of the church is Christ. . . . But the foundation of the empire is human law [*ius humanum*].'[372] (In the third book of the *Monarchia*, which discusses the relationship between the empire and the church and from which this quotation is taken, the empire is routinely referred to by its more habitual designation *imperium* rather than being called *monarchia*—presumably so as to leave no ambiguity that the Roman empire as headed by Henry VII was meant.) No more than Engelbert does Dante question the truth of the christian faith. But he goes further than Engelbert in removing completely any link between the empire and either the christian religion *qua* doctrine or the 'christian people'. Engelbert derives the legitimacy of the empire at least in part from the need to protect the *populus christianus*, and because of this gives the emperor greater responsibility for christendom than for the rest of humanity. Dante makes no such distinction: for him the *monarcha* or emperor is simply the lord of all mankind. It is true that he makes no distinction concerning the pope, either. For Dante, man requires 'a twofold guidance [*directivum*] in accordance with the twofold goal [*finis*], to wit the guidance of the pope, who leads mankind towards the life eternal in accordance with revelation [*secundum revelata*], and the guidance of the emperor, who directs the human race towards temporal happiness in accordance with the teachings of philosophy [*secundum phylosophica documenta*].'[373]

Engelbert is an excellent illustration of the emphasis on historical process, on time rather than space in the worldview of the period. History reached its high point with the incarnation of Christ, since when things had been going downhill in preparation of the ineluctable end of the world. For Engelbert, the Roman empire extended primarily along this time axis, and its continuity in time was more important than its continuity in space. Tellingly, Engelbert never discusses *where* the empire was. The closest he comes to situating the empire in space is when he lists parts of the world that it had lost. But this territorial erosion of the empire is, once again, actually discussed in the context of its development in time: like the world as a whole, the empire must decay as the end of time approaches. For Engelbert, even the best-intentioned and most energetic men are limited by the *temporum condicio*, or the 'condition of the age', that is, the point reached on the time axis and its proximity to the end of time.

[371] Dante, *Monarchia* 2.8.1.
[372] Dante, *Monarchia* 3.10.7.
[373] Dante, *Monarchia* 3.15.10.

Dante, for his part, shares with Engelbert the indifference to political geography typical of the period. But he is revolutionary in abandoning the fixation on the time axis. By conceiving of the empire as not only secular, separate from the church, but indeed as non-christian, Dante removes the empire from the world-historical process that is so important to Engelbert and indeed the conventional thinking of Latin christendom as a whole. This was in line with the secularism inherent in the aristotelianism of the age, and which Engelbert displays, too; but it left Dante with a difficulty for his theory that he does not address. As the rebellious and polemical attitude of his treatise shows, Dante was quite ready to break with orthodoxy. Nevertheless, my impression is that he was only half aware of what he was doing here. He as it were takes the empire out of time, turning it into something 'timeless'. Perhaps for that reason he ignores the prophecy of Daniel, which although it presented the empire as part of a divine plan also predicted its eventual downfall. Conversely, somewhat inconsistently, other elements of the time-oriented discourse of the period are retained if they exalt the empire—like the reference to the *monarchia perfecta* of the reign of Augustus and to the 'fullness of time'. This practically cries out for an answer to the question why the empire of the fourteenth century was no longer so perfect, of what had happened to the 'fullness of time', and why.

If, at the time when Dante wrote, the empire was still present in the collective consciousness of christendom, even though the German rulers as its notional leaders had no influence outside central Europe and northern Italy, it was because the notion of the unity of christendom continued to be powerful. It was that alone which enabled Dante to discuss the concept of empire *and* find an audience, even one that would bother to seek to refute him (as Guido Vernani was to do soon after his death). For all his secularism and distance from the papacy, Engelbert retains the notion of the empire as existing to protect the 'christian people' (from outsiders and from itself) even as he seeks to combine that with a wider role of the empire for humanity as a whole; moreover, since he also retains the notion of history as a divinely guided process he can answer the question why the empire had become so feeble. By contrast, if Dante abandoned that notion it was probably not a self-conscious decision but simply a side effect of his eagerness to separate the empire completely from the church. Engelbert managed to do that while holding on to the notion of a divinely guided process; Dante unwittingly threw out the baby with the bathwater.

He does lament the current condition of the world, which he expressly opposes to the *monarchia perfecta* of Augustus: 'Oh human race, how many storms . . . , how many shipwrecks must you suffer while, turned into a many-headed beast, you strive in opposite directions!'[374] (As we saw, Engelbert also employs this image, another indication that both authors drew on a common stock of arguments.) But no more than he explains why this could happen does Dante address the question of what ought to be done about it. One would think that giving up the notion of the empire—and, by extension, secular politics in general—being subject to divine agency necessarily left it in need of human agency, a programme for action, but this seems not to have occurred to Dante.

For Engelbert, positive law (i.e. law that is man-made rather than dictated by nature/reason) is the law of the cultural community (*gens*), which, in accordance with the social reality of the period, need not be coterminous with any kingdom; nevertheless in his theory this law is administered by some king. Similarly, Dante gives the *monarcha*

[374]Dante, *Monarchia* 1.16.4.

responsibility for peace and issues that concern all mankind. This is an attractive conception not least because it seems potentially relevant even to today's world. At present, the state (in parallel, in this respect, with the kingdom in Engelbert) is regarded as not only a political entity with its own legal system but also as a cultural community, or at least as responsible for the cultural community or communities within its borders. But the uncompromising defence of its own interest to which the doctrine of sovereignty entitles the government of a state may harm the interest of mankind (and thus, ultimately, itself—but it is liable to ignore that because of the 'blind covetousness' castigated by Dante). The notion that there must be norms that are binding on all humanity and that overrule 'sovereignty'—such as, notably, the prohibition of war enshrined in the UN charter—is one that mankind has again been groping for in the twentieth century. Since the concept of natural law went out of fashion in the nineteenth century, it has been replaced with the concept of *ius cogens* in twentieth-century international law, as a collective label for fundamental norms from which no derogation is possible and that can be legitimately enforced, or at least insisted on, by the 'international community'.

3.4.7 Pierre Dubois

If, typical in that respect of the scholastics in general, both Engelbert and Dante are more concerned with abstract verities than with practical issues, this is much less true of their contemporary, the lawyer Pierre Dubois (Petrus de Bosco, ∼1250–after 1321). A number of writings by him, containing proposals for all sorts of reforms, are extant. His favourite themes are all found in the treatise on which his fame chiefly rests, written between 1305 and 1307. The editor of the first printed edition of 1611, Jacques Bongars, gave it the title by which it has since been known, *De recuperatione Terre Sancte*, 'On the recovery of the Holy Land'.[375]

The agenda of this treatise includes the pacification of christendom, a more efficient manner to conduct lawsuits, a better education system, access to higher education for women, the transfer of all ecclesiastical property to secular trusteeship, salaries for the clergy paid by secular authorities to replace prebends, better regulation of monasteries and monastic orders. All this is 'marketed' by Pierre as necessary to strengthen christendom in its struggle against the heathen. The context was the fall of Acre in 1291, which triggered urgent calls for a new crusade to 'liberate' the Holy Land from the infidels.[376] Political discourse of the period referred to the necessity of a new crusade in the hackneyed fashion in which current political discourse routinely calls for democracy and human rights. Thus, the 1320 declaration of Arbroath, intended to get the pope to

[375]The literature on Pierre Dubois and on *De recuperatione* is vast. I have mainly consulted Baethgen (1950); Brandt (1929/30) and the introduction by Brandt to his English trans. of the treatise (Pierre Dubois 1956); Delisle Burns (1917); Diotti (1977); Gatto (1959, 1975); Kämpf (1935); the introduction by Langlois to his edn. of the treatise (Pierre Dubois 1891); Oexle (1977); delle Piane (1959, 1978); Power (1923); Powicke (1907); Renan (1873); Schein (1984); Schmid (1973); Scholz (1903: 375–443); Sherwood (1965); Zeck (1911). The Latin text of the treatise has been edited by Bongars (Pierre Dubois 1611), Langlois (Pierre Dubois 1891), and Diotti (Pierre Dubois 1977). I quote the latter edn., which (like the trans. by Brandt) contains both the division into chapters introduced by Bongars and the division into short paragraphs introduced by Langlois. I only indicate the latter, more convenient for locating the passage in question. The trans. provided here is my own.

[376]On the connection between the writings of Pierre Dubois and the debate on a new crusade, see Gatto (1959); Schein (1984).

put pressure on the English king to end his fight against the Scots, blames 'christian princes' for dishonestly claiming 'that they cannot come to the help of the Holy Land [*in subsidium terre sancte*] because of wars that they have with their neighbours'. The senders of the declaration promise that 'if the king of the English left us in peace, our said lord king [Robert Bruce] and we would go there [the Holy Land]'. The English king in question was Edward II, who in his reply to the imperial circular of 1312 expresses his hope that the renewal of the imperial dignity will bring 'wholesome increase' to all christendom and defeat to its enemies.[377] Philip IV of France, in his reply to the same circular, reminds the new emperor of the *piissimum negocium Terre Sancte*, 'the most pious matter of the Holy Land'.[378]

Philip subsequently wrote to pope Clement to pressure him to do something about the emperor's imminent attack on Robert of Anjou, which, Philip observes in his letter, might delay 'the matter of the Holy Land' or indeed render it unfeasible.[379] Clement thereupon threatened anyone attacking Robert with excommunication, warning of the 'most serious impediments and irreparable damage to the Holy Land [*gravissima scandala et irreparabilia incommoda Terre Sancte*]'.[380] The very abridgment of such phrases makes their formulaic character apparent: Clement of course means that the *reconquest* of the Holy Land might be jeopardized, not the Holy Land as such. King Edward of England avoids this formulaic language by merely alluding to the planned crusade—as any contemporary audience would have understood. As to the emperor himself, he had promised to give priority to the Holy Land already in his request to Clement to grant him the imperial coronation. In justifying his sentence against Robert of Anjou, he alleged that the activities of the defendant brought 'delay of the matter of the Holy Land [*retardatio negotii Terre Sancte*]'. When read the papal threat of excommunication, he had a notary record his reaction; this included the protestation that 'it is notorious that the lord emperor burns with the strongest desire for passage to the Holy Land [*ad passagium Terre Sancte dominus imperator summo desiderio noscitur anhelare*].'[381]

This was the climate in which Pierre Dubois wrote. No doubt he did have the success of the crusade at heart. He makes proposals for settling the Holy Land permanently and also treats it as a place where experiments were possible: it was easier to innovate and thereby demonstrate the merits of his proposed reforms where no established structures existed. Nevertheless, the many commentators that Pierre has attracted since the nineteenth century mostly concur that the crusade for him is essentially a 'pious pretext', as Ernest Renan has put it. Given that his treatise is full of rather radical proposals and indeed in part anticlerical, it must have seemed prudent to advocate those proposals as a contribution to the 'most pious matter of the Holy Land'.[382]

Pierre mentions that among his teachers at the Sorbonne were Thomas Aquinas and Siger of Brabant.[383] He is fond of quoting Aristotle and other learned literature.

[377] Supra n. 258.

[378] MGH Const. 4,2 no. 812, p. 811.

[379] 12.5.1313, MGH Const. 4,2 no. 948.

[380] 4.7.1313; MGH Const. 4,2 no. 1003.

[381] MGH Const. 4,1 no. 294; Const. 4,2 no. 946 p. 988, 1004.

[382] *Plus on combattait la cour de Rome, plus il fallait montrer de zèle pour les intérêts catholiques.* Renan (1873: 479) (Renan seems to have overlooked that the pope then resided at Avignon)—'One had to bow, so to speak, to the crusading ideal and then one was free to suggest anything!' Delisle Burns (1917: 106 n. 2).

[383] Pierre Dubois, *De recuperatione* 63, 132.

But philosophical refinement is no more his strong suit than the subtleties of the Latin language (to be sure, neither Engelbert nor Dante excel at Latin style, and at least some of the linguistic problems of the text of *De recuperatione* may be due to lack of diligence on the part of the scribe who produced the single surviving manuscript). The most distinctive quality displayed by Pierre is his pragmatism, his 'hands-on' approach. Among the problems that according to Pierre must be solved before christendom can hope to defeat the infidels, the constant violent conflict among christian princes and cities was perhaps the most important. Pierre usually refers to such conflict as *guerra* (more rarely as *bellum*). In what follows I have translated this as 'war', but it must not be forgotten that we are not talking about 'interstate' war.

'The wars of the *catholici* [christians] among themselves are the worst,' Pierre observes.[384] For they led to the killing of many people in circumstances that left little doubt of their eternal damnation—but unfortunately, according to Pierre, the more often people started wars the keener on war they became. Again it is noteworthy here, as in Baudri of Bourgueil or Philippe de Commynes, that war was clearly seen as essentially a bad habit that threatened the souls of those involved more than it threatened the functioning of society. Whenever someone was killed in war, Pierre explains, his surviving relatives would burn with the desire to continue the war to take their revenge (this reasoning illustrates that Pierre is indeed thinking of feuds). Waging war had become a way of life rather than a means to achieve peace as it should be. Peace, established by just war, would give people time for being virtuous and for acquiring new knowledge: like Dante, Pierre regards peace as a prerequisite of intellectual progress.[385]

In addition to weakening christendom and preventing it from gaining more knowledge, war also stood in the way of assembling a force sufficient for conquering the Holy Land. Pierre does not even discuss his conviction that this was a task to be undertaken jointly by all christians. For him, this goes without saying precisely because, typically for the period, his perception of christendom as a single community was so strong; but the paradoxical result is that the virulence of this perception has usually not been picked up by his recent commentators. Pierre points out that enough fighters for capturing and defending the Holy Land could only be provided if the christian rulers (*principes catholici*) acted jointly rather than making war on each other. Moreover, peace between them had to be permanent. Otherwise, on hearing that their possessions back home were suffering from war, they would look after their own inheritance at the expense of the lord's inheritance (*hereditas Domini*). 'Therefore it is necessary to establish, among all *catholici* or at any rate those loyal to the Roman church, a firm peace so as to create a single commonwealth, so strongly united that it cannot be divided.'[386]

A single commonwealth, *una respublica*: this is the essence of what Pierre is proposing. Mantra-like, though with constant semantic variation, the notion of christendom forming a single commonwealth occurs again and again in his text. His commentators since the nineteenth century have invariably understood him as advocating a league or federation

[384] Pierre Dubois, *De recuperatione* 2.

[385] *ut . . . possint homines . . . vacare virtutibus et scienciis adquirendis.* Pierre Dubois, *De recuperatione* 2. Cf. ibid. 27: *Idcirco pacem generalem querere et a Deo petere debemus, ut per pacem et in ejus tempore, cum alias fieri non possit, perfectas virtutes et sciencias adquiramus.*

[386] *Idcirco inter catholicos omnes, saltem ecclesie romane obedientes, pacem firmari taliter expedit quod una sit respublica, sic fortiter unita quod non dividatur.* Pierre Dubois, *De recuperatione* 2.

of 'states'. [387] Quite wrongly: he is not thinking of something composed of discrete units, but of a single community, defined by its religion. Hence the term *respublica* is routinely associated by him with the community of the faithful.[388] However, as the passage just quoted shows, the term *catholicus* (used by Pierre in the sense of 'christian') comprises not just the adherents of the Roman church, since he wants his project to include the *detentor imperii Constantinopolis*, the 'incumbent of the empire of Constantinople'. If he avoids the simpler and more usual expression 'emperor of Constantinople' it is because he regards Charles of Valois, the brother of Philip IV of France and later candidate to the German throne, as the rightful eastern emperor on account of his marriage with the heiress of the last 'Latin' emperor of Constantinople, evicted in 1261 when Constantinople was retaken by the Greeks. Thus, for Pierre, the actual eastern emperor was a usurper in addition to being guilty of not recognizing the pope (Andrónikos II Palaiológos, reigns 1282–1328; the manuscript of *De recuperatione* refers to him as *Peryalogus*, actually the name of the dynasty, without a first name). Nevertheless, Pierre wants him to participate in the pacification of christendom and the reconquest of the Holy Land.

In what follows, the 'christian commonwealth' will be designated by the expression *respublica catholicorum*, which appears in §27 of the treatise. It is the shortest among the many variants used by Pierre (even though in this respect it only narrowly beats *respublica christicolarum* in §106). How is this commonwealth to be organized? Unencumbered by excessive respect for tradition, Pierre elegantly and pragmatically separates the *respublica*, which is important to him, from the *imperium* in the sense of universal monarchy, which he considers impractical and anachronistic. This separation was not entirely without precedent: Pierre was influenced in more than one respect by the novel *Blanquerna* of his Catalan contemporary Ramon Llull (in Castilian spelling Ramón Lull; Raimundus Lullus; ∼1232/3–1315/16). Composed about 1283, it contains a project of a christian commonwealth governed not by the emperor but by the pope and his cardinals.[389] Nevertheless, the separation of *respublica* and *imperium* is not only a key element of *De recuperatione* (which, as far as I am aware, commentators have so far failed to notice), but the manner in which it is conceived, quite different from the example of Ramon Llull, is highly original.

Pierre thinks it 'likely' that a spiritual lord of the whole world is possible and desirable.[390] But this is not the case in the temporal sphere:

I believe that there is no one with a sane mind who considers it likely that at this late stage in time [*in hoc fine seculorum*] there could be a single temporal monarch of the whole world [*totius mondi, quoad temporalia, solus unus monarcha*] to govern everything [*qui omnia regeret*], whom all would obey as their superior [*superior*]. For if this were attempted, there would be wars, rebellions, and endless strife, which given the great number of people(s) [*multitudo populorum*:

[387] e.g. Diotti (1977: 36); Gatto (1959: 176); von der Heydte (1952: 100); Kämpf (1935: 106); Kelsen (1905: 30); delle Piane (1978: 71); Redslob (1917: 114); Scholz (1903: 395); Schmid (1973: 26); Schücking (1908: 561); Zeck (1911: 203).

[388] e.g. *respublica christicolarum ecclesie romane obedientium*; *respublica totius sancte religionis christicolarum*; *omnium credentium unam faciendo rempublicam*. Pierre Dubois, *De recuperatione* 3, 46, 64.

[389] Gatto (1975: 140); Oexle (1977: 321 n. 185).

[390] *verisimile est quod in spiritualibus possit et debeat esse princeps unicus et monarcha, qui spiritualiter percutiat et distringat usque ad orientem, occidentem, austrum et septentrionem*. Pierre Dubois, *De recuperatione* 63.

either translation is possible], the distance and diversity of the various countries [*loca*], and the natural inclination of men to differ nobody would be able to quell. Some rulers may have been popularly called monarchs of the world [*licet aliqui vulgariter vocati fuerunt mondi monarche*]. But I believe that since the parts of the world [*regiones*] have been peopled by men, no one has ever been obeyed by everyone.[391]

The reference to 'this late stage in time' may be intended to forestall the objection that the Roman empire of the 'fullness of time', under Augustus, had at least come close to being a true universal monarchy: that was then, but it cannot be a model for the present. For Pierre, this is simply because it is not feasible. There is no reference at all to the will of god, or issues of legitimacy, or moral issues.

It is probably no accident that in his discussion of universal monarchy Pierre avoids the words *imperator* and *imperium*. He only applies them to those concrete lordships commonly called 'empire' at the time, but which in practice were, and are treated by Pierre as, kingdoms like any other. The *imperium Constantinopolis* is mentioned only in passing. The western empire is the object of a short discussion (§13). Pierre expressly calls it *imperium Romanum*, even though he makes clear that it is identical with the *regnum Alemannie*, the kingdom of Germany, and held by the *reges Alemannie*, the kings of Germany. Pierre does not address the question whether the imperial dignity carried any special prerogatives, thus implicitly answering it in the negative. He does not posit any special relationship between the 'Roman empire' and the *respublica catholicorum*. At the same time, however, it is apparent that Pierre attributes to the imperial crown a special prestige. Both in *De recuperatione* and in other writings he urged that the French ruler or some other member of the French dynasty ought to seek to acquire it.

Pierre observes that the German kings could contribute much to the crusade, if the election necessary whenever the throne fell vacant did not offer endless occasions for war (*guerrarum occasiones infinite*) and self-seeking behaviour on the part of the electors. He pleads for a hereditary German kingship, which would dispense kings from giving away treasure and fortresses to pay for their election. This would prevent 'the welfare and prestige of the *respublica*, of the kingdom and empire of such illustrious people(s)' from decaying further (*ne pereat amplius salus et exaltatio reipublice, regni et imperii tam nobilium populorum*).[392] The reader might be tempted to understand *respublica* in this passage as referring to the German *regnum et imperium*. But Pierre consistently applies the term *respublica* to christendom, and even where there is ambiguity, as here, it is always possible to understand the term as referring to christendom. What he means here is that strengthening the crown in Germany would be advantageous for all of christendom, not least with respect to the potential contribution of the German crown to the crusade. This interpretation is corroborated by a similar passage in another treatise by Pierre, the *Pro facto Terre Sancte* of 1308. Here, Pierre inveighs against those involved in machinations against the German crown, 'to the greatest prejudice of the Roman church, the empire, the Holy Land, and the whole commonwealth of the followers of Christ'.

[391] Pierre Dubois, *De recuperatione* 63. *regiones*: Pierre either means Europe, Africa, and Asia, or 'east, west, south, and north' enumerated as potential provinces of the universal spiritual *monarcha* (see preceding n.).

[392] Pierre Dubois, *De recuperatione* 13. The plural *populi* at the time could simply mean 'the population', but also 'peoples' (conceivably, this is a reference to the Franks, Saxons, etc.).

Clearly here, for Pierre what is bad for one of the christian realms is also bad for all christendom.[393]

Pierre clings to the notion of a single christian community even as many of its princes and cities did not recognize a superior on earth, that is, in temporal affairs (*superiores in terris non recognoscentes*).[394] Pierre expressly includes the king of France among them (§5). This non-recognition of any superior is simply a fact for Pierre; he does not elaborate on it in any way. From today's perspective, the notion of independent rulers (and cities) on the one hand and their membership in a single 'commonwealth' on the other seems contradictory. Recent commentators have all chosen to read Pierre as if he were talking about states entering a loose federation, similar to a present-day 'international organization'. They have failed to understand that when Pierre says 'princes and cities' he means just that—not 'states'.

Engelbert and Dante base their conception of the empire or of the christian commonwealth on the principle of subsidiarity: the emperor is responsible only for what concerns mankind as a whole and which cannot be dealt with at a lower level. Everything else is the responsibility of some largely autonomous lower-level power-holder or community. Both Engelbert and Dante acknowledge the legitimacy of local law adapted to local cultural particularities. Pierre Dubois agrees: 'Hardly anything in this world is good and appropriate for any place, for any period, and for any person. Therefore the laws and statutes [*leges et statuta*] of men differ in accordance with differences of place, period, and person.'[395]

For Engelbert, local law is complemented by a universal law, which is the law of nature, or, to the extent that the two overlap, Roman law. In particular, this involves the protection of life and property, which cannot be guaranteed without a supreme power that ensures general peace. Dante posits 'that the human race should be ruled by [the *monarcha*] with respect to those things that it shares in common, that concern everybody'. Although he does not elaborate, he presumably means much the same as Engelbert. Like Engelbert, he stresses that the purpose of having a single supreme head is to safeguard peace. As to Pierre Dubois, his insistence on 'princes and cities that do not recognize a superior on earth' seems at first blush like an assertion of 'sovereignty'. But it is not. In the project proposed by Pierre, there is a strictly enforced limitation on the freedom of princes and cities: they must not go to war with each other. Seen in this light, it becomes apparent that Pierre is actually very close to Engelbert and Dante. Both Engelbert and Dante grant autonomy to lower-level rulers and see the main task of the emperor in the enforcement of peace. This is precisely the task that Pierre assigns to his *respublica catholicorum*, which thus turns out to be the exact equivalent of the empire as proposed by the other two authors: princes and cities are free to act as they please, except that they must remain at peace with each other and will be compelled to do so on behalf of the commonwealth if necessary.

Indeed, although he rejects the notion of a universal secular *monarcha*, Pierre not only concedes that a universal spiritual *monarcha* may be both feasible and desirable, but (somewhat reminiscent in this respect of Ramon Llull) he actually makes the pope

[393] *qui credunt se promovendos contra electum in regem, ex quo electus est, in eius mortem ac destruccionem machinantur in gravissimum preiudicium ecclesie Romane, imperii, terre sancte tociusque reipublice christicolarum.* Quoted Kämpf (1935: 50).

[394] That *in terris* means 'on earth' and not 'in their lands' is shown by Walther Brandt (1956: 78 n.).

[395] Pierre Dubois, *De recuperatione* 48.

the supreme officer of his *respublica catholicorum*.[396] The pope is to convene a general council where princes and prelates (*principes et prelati*: cities for some reason are not mentioned) will accept the obligation to have any dispute settled peacefully. Those who recognize no temporal superior will accept the obligation to submit disputes to arbitration. Unfortunately, there is some semantic ambiguity in the manuscript on this point, which has given rise to a variety of interpretations. The most competent (even if to date it seems to have received little attention) is no doubt that by Merriam Sherwood, who combines textual criticism with knowledge of the fairly standardized arbitration procedures current at the time, and with which Pierre as a lawyer would have been familiar.[397]

If Sherwood is right, Pierre was not thinking of a permanent court of arbitration. Princes and prelates who had an overlord were to pledge to accept his jurisdiction. This part of the project is usually overlooked. In his 1235 pacification of the empire (*Mainzer Reichslandfrieden*), the emperor Frederic II sought to render the adjudication of disputes mandatory, but left his subjects free to resort to violence anyway if they did not like the result—quite simply no doubt because nothing else was feasible. Although the emperor commands that no one may take the law in his own hands (*ut nullus . . . se ipsum vindicet*), this prohibition turns out to be only partial, for the text continues: 'unless he first submits his complaint to his judge and obtains a final decision in accordance with the law [*nisi prius querelam suam coram suo iudice propositam secundum ius usque ad diffinitivam sentenciam prosequatur*]'. Merely to get subjects to try adjudication first was progress and could clearly not be taken for granted.[398] Pierre seems to have been faced with the same problem: adjudication of disputes had yet to be made mandatory for lesser actors, just as much as for those who lacked an overlord; it was only the procedure that was to be different.

Pierre simply says that where jurisdiction existed it was to be made compulsory—this evidently concerns the lesser actors. If no jurisdiction existed (which would be the case if the actors in question acknowledged no temporal superior), the parties were each to nominate six arbitrators (three clerics and three laymen). The arbitrators were to decide 'in accordance with the laws and customs of the regions and kingdoms [*secundum leges et consuetudines regnorum et regionum*]', meaning no doubt the local law of the parties.[399] The decision could be appealed to the pope. This may appear surprising, since then as now arbitration was normally considered final. The probable explanation is that in Roman law obligatory jurisdiction must include the possibility of appeal, and although what Pierre proposes is technically arbitration, it is also obligatory. Sherwood notes the parallel of the canon law of the period, which makes a distinction between voluntary and obligatory arbitration and admits the possibility of appeal in the latter case though not in the former.

The participants in the council were to swear an appropriate oath; documents binding both them and their heirs were to be deposited at the Holy See and published. The

[396] Pierre Dubois, *De recuperatione* 3, 12, 118.

[397] Sherwood (1965).

[398] MGH Const. 2 no. 196.

[399] Pierre (*De recuperatione* 3) employs this phrase from the perspective of the plaintiffs (*quibuscunque dicentibus se passos injurias secundum leges et consuetudines regnorum et regionum . . . fiat . . . justicie complementum*); but clearly the judgement to be delivered would be based on those same laws.

participants: Pierre here calls them 'all princes, prelates, and nobles'.[400] Once more it is evident that he does not think only of 'sovereign' actors but envisages attendance by everyone who was anyone in christendom. In §106, Pierre specifically speaks of attendance at the council of the German electors, who certainly recognized the king of Romans as their temporal superior. 'Prelates'—especially bishops—might also wield a great deal of secular power. But the only one among them not to recognize a temporal superior was the incumbent of the see of Rome, that is, the pope.

Pierre is confident that as a result of implementing his project, armed conflict in christendom would become redundant. Those desperate to fight were free to wage war on the infidels. On the other hand, Pierre does not put his trust in declarations of good intentions alone. Words were not enough: pamphlets and sermons, the 'elegant laments and clamourings of the preachers'[401] had proved insufficient to avert people from war. In the nature of things, 'the malice of men, their inclination to evil, their covetousness, and greed' could only increase, but 'the holiness, the oratory, the passion, and knowledge of preachers opposed to war' did not. As in the reference to 'this late stage in time', there is a whiff here of Engelbertian pessimism about what the world was coming to: elsewhere, Pierre claims that 'people nowadays are much more covetous, greedy, careful and clever in their malice, than they used to.'[402]

For Pierre as for Engelbert, justice needs to rely on coercion (*iusticia neccessarie compulsiva*).[403] Consequently, he proposes a sanctions mechanism to give teeth to the mandatory adjudication that will abolish war in christendom. He had developed that mechanism already in an earlier treatise, written in 1300 and variously referred to in the literature as *Summaria brevis* or *De abreviacione*.[404] In *De recuperatione* Pierre takes up ideas already put forward in that earlier work.[405] If anyone fails to submit to adjudication and makes war on fellow christians, he is to be considered the enemy of the entire *respublica*. §4 of *De recuperatione* seems to indicate that the pope will trigger the sanctions mechanism by an appropriate pronouncement. Whereas in that passage Pierre opines that the temporal punishment thus incurred was preferable to excommunication, §101 nevertheless makes automatic excommunication part of the sanctions mechanism, too. There is an obvious parallel here to the mechanism of putting someone under the

[400] *Tunc vinculis pacis juratis ab omnibus principibus, prelatis et nobilibus, et per instrumenta publica vallatis, taliter quod ligarent heredes et obligarent ad similiter jurandum. Et hiis ad thesaurum ecclesie romane perlatis, repositis, et in registro publico redactis, inciperetur . . . expeditio Terre Sancte*. Pierre Dubois, *De recuperatione* 118.

[401] *elegantes predicantium luctus et clamores*. Pierre Dubois, *De recuperatione* 109.

[402] *Evenire juxta solitum hactenus cursum nature videmus quod malicia hominum et inclinatio ad malum, cupiditatem et avariciam, semper crescit; non autem sanctitas, orationes, affectiones, et sciencie predicantium bella detestantium*. Pierre Dubois, *De recuperatione* 109.—*Item hodie sunt homines longe plus solito cupidi, avari, in malicia prudentes et astuti*. Ibid. 133.

[403] Pierre Dubois, *De recuperatione* 109.

[404] The full title is normally cited as *Summaria brevis et compendiosa doctrina felicis expedicionis et abreviacionis guerrarum et litium regni Francorum*, 'Short summary and succinct instruction for the successful execution and abridgment of wars and quarrels in the kingdom of the French'. But in §120 of *De recuperatione*, Pierre cites this treatise as *De abreviatione guerrarum et litium regni Francorum, et de reformatione status universalis reipublice christicolarum* 'On the abridgment of wars and quarrels in the kingdom of the French, and the reform of conditions in the universal commonwealth of the followers of Christ'.

[405] Pierre Dubois, *De recuperatione* 4, 5, 11, 116. Cf. the discussion of the 'new military doctrine [*nova pugnandi doctrina*]' advocated in the *Summaria* by Gatto (1959: 166–71).

ban of the empire (as, following his excommunication, Martin Luther famously was at the diet of Worms in 1521). Having rejected the kind of emperor advocated by Engelbert and Dante, Pierre gives the pope much the same prerogatives—a tendency visible both here and when Pierre makes the pope the supreme judge of appeal, a function traditionally attributed to the emperor. It is not clear that Pierre envisaged the pope as having to consult with anyone before declaring someone a public enemy; nor is there any indication that the council advocated by Pierre was to be permanent institution.

Anyone labelled a public enemy by the pope forfeited his possessions, which were to be confiscated and used for financing the crusade. Possessions where the culprit did not reside, and thus could not defend, were to be confiscated by magnates in the vicinity, failing which they would incur the same sanctions; as would anyone assisting the culprit in any way. Possessions that the culprit was in a position to defend were to be made the object of a kind of economic war. The culprit would retreat to some castle or inaccessible area: but rather than trying to capture him, which might cause loss of life and yet not bring success, he ought to be starved. Harvest time or the time just before was best for this. The harvest of the territory in question was to be destroyed or used to feed the garrisons of fortresses surrounding it, which had the task of interrupting any exchange between it and the outside world. Nothing should be left which people in the area might live off (*ut nichil remaneat de quo vivere possint*); in the *Summaria*, Pierre speaks concretely of the destruction of vineyards and orchards.[406]

In *De recuperatione*, Pierre says nothing about the treatment of the population of the blockaded area, whereas in the *Summaria* he explains that the lives of the inhabitants should be spared if possible. Those resisting the sanctions should have a hand or foot cut off, but should not be killed, 'lest the souls of the dying be consigned to hell'.[407] Pierre hoped that the deterrent effect of such measures would increase 'obedience and fear' of the crown.[408] In the *Summaria*, Pierre wants by such means to make the French king lord of the world and to enable him to acquire the imperial dignity. In *De recuperatione*, he still wants French hegemony over christendom, but has discarded the notion that anyone could be (secular) lord of the world. Perhaps because a single king is a better object of obedience and fear than the *respublica* advocated in *De recuperatione*, the latter treatise makes no mention of the kind of exemplary cruelty advocated in the *Summaria*. Nevertheless, in *De recuperatione*, too, Pierre expects the spectacle of the sanctions mechanism being applied to some to have a deterrent effect on the many (§118). In *De recuperatione*, even the public enemy himself is not to be executed but forced to settle in the Holy Land. Exiling criminals to the Holy Land had apparently been common practice and the object of much contemporary criticism.[409] Given the declared purpose of the treatise, it seems somewhat paradoxical that Pierre (e.g. §8) considers banishment to the Holy Land to have a deterrent effect on would-be breakers of the peace.

At first sight, what Pierre proposes bears a surprising resemblance to today's concept of collective security. It is possible that it goes back to him. The concept was popularized from the seventeenth century onwards in a great many peace plans mostly advocating an

[406] *De recuperatione* 5; cf. Gatto (1959: 169).

[407] *ne decedencium anime ad inferos transmittantur*. Quoted Gatto (1959: 169).

[408] *Omnes gentes . . . sibique similia fieri pertimentes ad obedienciam et timorem regis potestatis de facili convertuntur*. Quoted Gatto (1959: 170).

[409] Schein (1984: 100).

organization of the same basic type that in the twentieth century was put into practice first in the shape of the League of Nations, then of the United Nations Organization.[410] The prototype of those peace plans was furnished in 1623 by Émeric Crucé in his *Nouveau Cynée*. This proposes the creation of a league of princes, who will send delegates to a permanent assembly that will settle their disputes peacefully. If those concerned do not obey the decision of the assembly, they are to be compelled militarily by the members of the league. Crucé was probably not widely read, but almost certainly[411] inspired another project that was, the 1638 *Grand dessein* of Maximilien de Béthune, duke of Sully (who falsely ascribed it to Henry IV of France). Later peace plans followed the pattern found there. Crucé thus became the ancestor of the United Nations Organization. But did he get his ideas from Pierre Dubois?

He may well have read *De recuperatione* in the Bongars edition of 1611, or indeed have studied the manuscript, which was in a Paris collection later bought by ex-queen Kristina of Sweden (who took it to Rome and left it to the pope; the manuscript is now in the Vatican library). There are quite a few parallels between Pierre and Crucé, which appear hitherto to have gone unnoticed. Like Pierre, Crucé advocates an improved legal system, better education, and the confiscation of prebends—but later peace plans do not. Like Pierre, Crucé regards the pope as the appropriate person to initiate his project. Unlike Pierre, the project proposed by Crucé was not to be limited to christian princes. Yet like Pierre, Crucé regards the pacification to be brought about by his league not as the final goal of the project, but as a precondition for all sorts of other reforms, discussed at length. By contrast, later peace plans treat peace as an end in itself. Finally, both Pierre and Crucé are eager to enhance the domestic power of rulers. On the other hand, Crucé wants disputes to be settled by the assembly of delegates of the league members, not by adjudication, and subsequent seventeenth- and eighteenth-century peace plans usually follow him on this. It was only at the end of the eighteenth century that the notion of adjudication of 'international' disputes again gained ground, and the nineteenth-century international peace movement made this one of its chief demands. Nor is there any trace of the sanctions mechanism proposed by Pierre in the *Nouveau Cynée* or in any subsequent peace plans.

Strikingly, the sanctions mechanism that was to have underpinned the 1919 League of Nations—with aggressors to be cut off from all economic intercourse with League members rather than attacked—is close to what Pierre had proposed, too. This may be fortuitous; yet Pierre and his ideas had gained a certain notoriety in the course of the nineteenth century. French scholars like Natalis de Wailly, E. P. Boutaric, and above all Ernest Renan helped to turn Pierre into a better-known figure in the nineteenth century than, for all we know, he had been in his own day—there is no evidence that in his lifetime his ideas had any impact on anyone, or even that they were at all widely disseminated. From the point of view of the history of ideas of the fourteenth century, he is interesting not because he shaped the thinking of his time but because he reflects it. Concerning the history of ideas of the nineteenth century, however, it may well be the other way around. By the late nineteenth century, the sanctions mechanism proposed by Pierre in the *Summaria* and in *De recuperatione* was in the public domain, and the name

[410] TerMeulen (1917/1940) provides an overview; see also Hinsley (1963: part I).
[411] Cf. on this the introduction by Thomas Balch to his edn. of the *Nouveau Cynée* (Crucé 1909).

Pierre Dubois was sufficiently well known to attract the curiosity of adherents of the peace movement and of those who campaigned for an international organization to improve international relations. In the two decades between the first Hague conference of 1899 and the founding of the League of Nations in 1919, Pierre was made the object of articles, or mentioned in books, by numerous representatives of that intellectual and political current. Most of those contributions focus on the compulsory arbitration proposed by Pierre, putting less emphasis on the sanctions mechanism or indeed ignoring it altogether. Nevertheless, they indicate that Pierre loomed reasonably large in the intellectual field of vision of those pushing for the establishment of the League of Nations.[412] It is thus quite possible that those who devised the sanctions mechanism for that organization were directly or indirectly influenced by Pierre—more probably indirectly since neither the *Summaria* nor *De recuperatione* were available in translation.

One factor that no doubt contributed to the modest revival enjoyed by Pierre around the turn of the twentieth century was his French chauvinism, endearing or irritating depending on whether one was French or not. Pierre thought that France, more particularly the area around Paris, was inhabited by a superior brand of men. He does not attribute this to their descent or culture, but to an astrological phenomenon, the peculiarly happy impact that the stars had on France.[413] In the *Summaria*, Pierre declares that 'it would be to the advantage of the entire *respublica* if the whole world were subject to the French kingdom, provided that its king, as has become the custom, is begotten, born, and raised in that kingdom,' the reason being its astrologically desirable location. The king therefore 'should see to it and find ways to subjugate the peoples and kingdoms to himself in a just fashion [*videat . . . qualiter et per quas vias iuste sibi possit gentes et regna subiugare*]'.[414] In a 'secret' appendix of *De recuperatione* destined for the French king, Pierre explains how implementing his project would enhance the power of the French crown. For example, it would make it easier to conquer the empire of Constantinople for the French dynasty, and make it possible to give the refounded crusader kingdom of Jerusalem to the Anjou dynasty of Naples. The Roman empire (i.e. Germany) would become a hereditary possession of a junior branch of the French royal house; a portion of western Germany would be ceded to the French crown in the process, along with the suzerainty of the German crown over northern Italy. The pope was to settle in France, and a French majority in the college of cardinals would see to it that in future the pope himself would be French—a prophesy already in the process of fulfilment at that time, since pope Clement, a Frenchman who spent his entire pontificate in French-speaking Europe, was working on this. In the course of the secularization of ecclesesiastical property advocated by Pierre, the papal lands (in Italy and France) were to be transferred to the French crown, and likewise the suzerainty that the pope claimed over various realms of christendom.[415]

Neither the chauvinism manifest in such proposals nor the notion of a hegemonial leadership for christendom are unusual for their time. Pierre himself, quoting Ovid in support, observes that 'we commonly see that to each the law or custom or statute of

[412]e.g. Delisle Burns (1917); Figgis (1901); Grauert (1908, 1909); Meyer (1908); Powicke (1907); Redslob (1917: 105–16); Schnürer (1908); Schücking (1908: 559–63); Vesnitch (1911); de Wulf (1919).
[413]Pierre Dubois, *De recuperatione* 139; Kämpf (1935: 97).
[414]Pierre Dubois, *Summaria*, quoted Kämpf (1935: 97–8).
[415]Pierre Dubois, *De recuperatione* 112–17; cf. 104.

his native country seems best, even if it is less useful than that of another.'[416] Whereas Engelbert shows no overt chauvinism, Dante in the *Monarchia* similarly declares Italy to be the most noble part of Europe (*Ytalia Europe regio nobilissima*),[417] and regards the 'Roman people' as superior to every other, destined to lead. His adulation of the emperor Henry VII was hardly less than the devotion for Philip IV of France displayed by Pierre. But Pierre Dubois has been the object of far more censure, by non-French authors, than Dante, because it was felt that his peace project was at odds with his desire to make the French king more powerful, and that he was therefore insincere. Most commentators followed Fritz Kern, for whom Pierre was advocating the peace project put forward in *De recuperatione* to veil his 'naked lust for conquest'.[418] O. G. Oexle, on the other hand, thinks that the 'secret' appendix of *De recuperatione* was meant as a bait for the French king.[419] Perhaps so; but it would hardly be correct to go to the other extreme of interpreting the chauvinism of *De recuperatione* and other writings by Pierre as a clever masking of the fundamental sincerity of the peace project. The whole problem is the result of a misunderstanding, caused by insufficient attention to the terminology used by Pierre and the worldview that it transports. Ernst Zeck considers it a 'contradiction' that Pierre recommends a 'league of European states [*einen europäischen Staatenbund*]' and yet at the same time seeks preponderance (*Übermacht*) for France.[420] Zeck and other nineteenth- or twentieth-century commentators take for granted that, for Pierre as for themselves, christendom consisted of a plurality of 'states'. Conversely, it never occurred to Pierre that anyone might fail to see christendom as a single community, even if it contained 'princes' or 'cities' that did not 'recognize a superior on earth'—it was not therefore made up of 'states', and it is remarkable how little Pierre even speaks of 'realms'. Like Engelbert and Dante, he is not interested in institutional entities; apart from the 'cities', his political actors are individuals.

Pierre evidently employs *respublica* in the same sense as Engelbert and Dante. As Engelbert in particular makes clear, the expression denotes a community created by mutual ties and common values rather than by common subjection to any individual or collective (of which Engelbert, following Cicero, tellingly makes no mention). To object that wanting to strengthen the French crown was incompatible with wanting to bring peace to christendom presupposes the political assumptions of our own day, in particular the concept of 'sovereign states', which, responsible only to themselves, play zero-sum games with each other. It ignores the political assumptions of Pierre himself, most notably the concept of christendom as a single community that every king, and indeed for that matter any lesser individual, co-represents. In the *Summaria*, Pierre complains that 'the vice of disrespect for the welfare and interest of the *respublica* has up to now been more

[416] *communiter videmus quod cuilibet plus placet lex vel consuetudo seu statutum terre sue natalis, licet sit minus expediens quam alterius.* Pierre Dubois, *De recuperatione* 90, where Pierre also quotes Ovid, *Ex Ponto* 1.3.35–6.

[417] Dante, *Monarchia* 2.3.17.

[418] Kern speaks of *Umhüllung nackter Eroberungslust.* Quoted Zeck (1911: 206 n. 17a); for similar criticism from pre-First World War German historians, see e.g. Scholz (1903: 410); Zeck (1911: 208). In the same vein, Carlo Schmid, in an article first publ. in 1937, qualifies the peace project as 'wily' (*gerissen*; 1973: 12), and Angelo Diotti calls Pierre 'cynical' (1977: 23).

[419] Oexle (1977: 331).

[420] Zeck (1911: 207).

strongly developed in the kingdom of France than in other parts of the world.'[421] Pierre expects the French king to carry out reforms of the kingdom and observes that this would earn Philip respect, indeed preponderance in the entire 'christian people [*populus christianus*]'. Whether the word *respublica* here means 'commonwealth' or 'public weal', the import of the passage is that the weakness of the French crown is bad for christendom as a whole. Conversely, by putting his own kingdom in order the French king is serving the cause of christendom, and any ability on his part to project power even beyond his own kingdom can only be good for christendom, too.

This is because, far from being wary of intervention in the 'domestic' affairs of other actors as being contrary to their 'sovereignty', Pierre actually calls for just this kind of intervention to be made systematic. In the literature on Pierre, it is usually explained that he wants 'international' disputes to be settled by adjudication, and when the sanctions mechanism is described, the impression is created that it is to be applied only to such 'international' disputes. In fact, Pierre in the relevant section of his treatise speaks not only of conflict between actors who recognize no temporal superior but of conflict between any actors in christendom. For him, adjudication by the proposed panels of arbitrators was as it were the default method for settling disputes, to be applied if no other jurisdiction was available. But the sanctions mechanism was not limited to this default option: it was to be applied to any actors that disregarded the obligation not to resort to force against fellow christians. Both in the *Summaria* and in *De recuperatione* Pierre supplies a hypothetical example of someone breaking the peace and incurring the sanctions: in the *Summaria*, he assigns this part to the duke of Lorraine, in *De recuperatione* to the duke of Burgundy. He expressly calls both of them vassals of the French crown. But this means that in the version of collective security with which we are dealing here, the collective is to watch over the behaviour not only of its 'sovereign' members, but of subordinate actors 'within' or 'under' them as well. Since carrying out the sanctions is the obligation of all christians, they would be called on to act against aggressors like the duke of Lorraine or the duke of Burgundy even though both were subjects of the French king.

Indeed, Pierre is not interested primarily in preventing some fourteenth-century analogue of 'international' conflict, but in getting lesser lords to obey the crown (any crown, though preferably the French crown). Thus, in holding out to the French king the prospect of gains that would accrue from endorsing his project, he expected that the French crown would be able to assert the suzerainty over northern Italy that he wanted the German crown to cede to it much more forcefully than the German crown had been able to in the past. We saw how difficult it was for Henry VII to assert his authority over unwilling vassals in Lombardy and Tuscany, supported or at least condoned as they were by Robert of Anjou, the French crown, and the pope. Conversely, under the project proposed by Pierre, the pope would have declared such rebels against the crown public enemies of christendom, thereby obliging all other christian princes to help bring them to terms on penalty of incurring sanctions themselves. For Pierre, this would have made christendom more peaceful no matter which crown benefited; for astrological reasons, if the crown in question was the French crown, that was all for the better, and far from a contradiction.

[421] *Vicium autem contemptus salutis et utilitatis reipublice plus in regno Francie quam in aliis mundi partibus hactenus inolevit.* Quoted Kämpf (1935: 72).

It is only by abstracting from present-day ideas on political structures that it becomes possible to see what for Pierre was self-evident and did not have to be spelled out. Individual princes might be powerful. But the stress here is on 'individual': none of them had the resources of 'states' at their disposal. The proposed sanctions mechanism shows that Pierre saw most aggressors as ultimately having to rely on themselves and a few followers. However high their rank, however substantial and widely scattered their possessions, in an emergency they could rely only on local resources and not on the supralocal power at the disposal of the agents of present-day states. In the world inhabited by Pierre, any power-holders could ultimately be reduced to a single castle. (The only significant exception were kings: not because they had supralocal material power but because kings inspired special loyalty throughout their kingdom. We shall return to this key aspect of the politics of the period in Chapter 4.) Conversely, nothing more than a single castle was needed for waging war—or rather, feuds: that is why 'war' was so widespread in christendom, since a castle was within reach even of any minor lord. War, to the extent that it was a problem, for Pierre was a fundamentally domestic problem, whether he is dealing with the French kingdom as in the *Summaria* or with war within christendom as in *De recuperatione*. The only inside/outside division that really matters to Pierre is that between christians and infidels.

In line with the intellectual fashion of their time, Engelbert, Dante, and Pierre Dubois all have a markedly secular streak, but none is secular to the point of being irreligious. Each combines secularism, even anticlericalism, and religiosity in his own peculiar manner. This is apparent for example in the role that the will of god plays in their thinking. For Engelbert, history is fully determined by the divine master plan, which no human effort can modify—except possibly by hastening the onset of what is preordained anyway: attacking the empire may cause the antichrist to appear sooner. Dante regards the Roman empire as willed by god in the sense that god has, in the past, manifested his approval, even support of the empire, but he leaves open the question to what extent god or man is currently responsible for the empire's fate. Unlike Engelbert, he does not discuss the empire's future at all. He looks backward only, eulogizing pre-christian Rome and the *monarchia perfecta* of the age of Augustus. Pierre, for his part, is devoted to the cause of christendom, but seems markedly indifferent to the question of what might or might not be the will of god. Much more than the other two authors, he focuses on human rather than divine agency. He is by far the least fatalistic of the three in his underlying conviction that given but the will the lot of christendom may be greatly improved, to the point of gaining for the christian commonwealth the *monarchia mundi*—for, curiously, he ends up by reintroducing that concept.

For Pierre, the future holds *promise*: it may bring achievements for which the past offers no precedent. As far as Engelbert is concerned, things can only get worse. Dante would no doubt have been more than happy if things could again be made as good as they were in the great Roman past: he looks to the past as his exemplar. For Engelbert and Dante, the present is what remains of the past. In striking contrast, Pierre believes in progress: for him the past is only a prelude. In the context of his proposals for a new educational system, Pierre recommends that students less gifted in the study of letters (*doctrina litterarum*) should instead receive technical training. Citing the work of 'friar Roger Bacon of the Minorite order [*frater Rogerus Bacon de ordine Minorum*]', more concretely his *Opus maius* (which Pierre refers to by the title 'On the uses of mathematics'), Pierre calls for greater attention to the mechanical arts (*artes mecanice*)

not least in the military sphere. He believes that thanks to the mathematical and natural sciences (*mathematice et naturales sciencie*) many things were feasible (*possibilia fieri*) that 'in these western parts' were unknown (*in hiis regionibus Occidentis*: one wonders what the implied Other here is: Constantinople? the Muslim world?).[422]

Pierre thinks that in any period those realms had the best warriors that held intellectual endeavour (*studium*) in esteem. Indians, Assyrians, Greeks, and Romans had succeeded one another in occupying this position of preeminence. The place of the Romans had now been taken by the peoples north of the Alps; an assertion supported (if vaguely) by that favourite reference of the period, the 'tales of the ancients'.[423] Pierre thus takes up the notion of the migration of world monarchy from east to west, but gives it a curious twist in attributing the phenomenon not to the will of god but to educational standards. Moreover, he does not hesitate simply to prolong the sequence beyond the Romans, implicitly discarding the doctrine that their empire was the last of four and would not end until the coming of the antichrist. The Romans for him are not the 'end of history': the peoples north of the Alps have now taken over from them.

Pierre voices his conviction that it would bring great advantage to christendom 'if the study of philosophy were greatly increased throughout our commonwealth [i.e., christendom: *si philosophie studium in tota nostra republica fortiter augeretur*]'. 'Philosophy' was one of the four faculties of the universities of the period and comprised every kind of intellectual endeavour that the other three—medicine, law, and theology—did not, thus also encompassing for example mathematics and the natural sciences (whence 'Ph.D.', *philosophiae doctor*, as an academic degree even in mathematics or the natural sciences in today's universities as well, at least in the English-speaking world). More such 'philosophy' would enable christians to attain world monarchy like the ancients:

> So if the whole community of christians [*secta catholicorum*] with all its realms and countries forms one commonwealth [*si ergo secta catholicorum unam in omnibus regnis et locis faciat rempublicam*], and promotes [*suscitet*] intellectual endeavour [*studium*] wherever possible, the same phenomenon would necessarily result of this commonwealth in future growing ever greater and gaining world monarchy in the course of time [*quod hec respublica mondi monarchiam, ex nunc in posterum augendo, processu temporis optineret*]. With respect to spiritual (not temporal) allegiance [*obediencia*] this is desirable and appears to be a likely outcome.[424]

Better education means material progress and thus more and better armies. If in addition christendom ceases to fight itself—and Pierre is advertising what he considers the solution to that problem—then nothing will stop the christian commonwealth from achieving hegemony. If his reforms were implemented, Pierre thinks, then the result would be

> that far more than hitherto christians [*catholici*] will be virtuous, educated [*litterati*], wealthy, longlived, and capable of subjugating barbarian peoples [*barbare nationes*]. For since they will no longer have to wage war on each other or fear that this might happen . . . it is likely that with mutual affection their princes will all come together, or at any rate will, from every corner, send against the infidels innumerable troops destined to stay in the lands to be acquired for

[422] Pierre Dubois, *De recuperatione* 84; cf. ibid. 79.

[423] *flos milicie hactenus secuta est studium de regno in regnum, ut de Indis ad Asirios, et de Asiriis ad Grecos, de Grecis ad Romanos, de Romanis ad Citramontanos, prout legimus per hystorias antiquorum.* Pierre Dubois, *De recuperatione* 70.

[424] Pierre Dubois, *De recuperatione* 70.

their durable defence, so that quite quickly the commonwealth of those christians that recognize the Roman church will become much larger, at the expense of all those who have no united commonwealth and no . . . love . . . for god and their neighbours [*amor ad Deum et proximos*].[425]

This vision, which reads like an anticipation of western colonialism, does not just conjure up a glorious past. It does not seek merely to copy an example, even though it is aware of the example of earlier hegemonial structures. It lacks any transcendental or metaphysical dimension: the will of god plays no role here. Indeed, it is markedly materialist in stressing, albeit among other things, wealth and longevity, which it anticipates christians to have more of in future than they did in the past (*sequitur catholicos longe plus quam hactenus fuerunt futuros esse . . . locupletes, longeviores*): a rare, early manifestation of the belief in progress that later came to be characteristic of western civilization. At its bottom was a social and economic dynamism, the causes of which are examined in Chapter 4.

[425] Pierre Dubois, *De recuperatione* 70.

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4

Pre-industrial Europe

4.1 A new, more dynamic era

As discussed, the economy of the pre-christian Mediterranean world, in which trade and technological innovation played a comparatively small role, was relatively static, not characterized by the kind of 'economic growth' nowadays considered normal and indeed imperative. As we saw in Chapter 2, the population of the Roman empire is generally assumed to have reached a maximum of about fifty million (seventy million if we take a high estimate) around the beginning of our era. In other words, the number of inhabitants thereafter remained stagnant; indeed, the long-term trend even in the prosperous early part of the first millennium was probably downward.

The disappearance of the western Roman empire in the fifth century was followed by a further decline, both of the population of that part of the world and of its living standards.[1] Exactly why this should have been so seems hard to answer. It cannot just have been the result of instability, even though this would have been an exacerbating factor. Visigothic Spain was essentially free of foreign invasion and hardly affected severely by the recurrent infighting of the ruling elite over the throne. The royal court at Toledo at least provided the country with some measure of administrative unity and continuity—yet even if it was less badly affected than war-torn Italy, Spain did not escape the economic and cultural degradation observable throughout the west. The eastern empire seems still to have been populous and wealthy in the sixth century, and its marked decay, both economically and culturally, from the seventh century onwards is easy to blame on its great territorial losses and long drawn-out struggle for survival against the Arabs. Yet this conspicuous drain on resources may mask other, additional, and conceivably still more important causes undermining its vitality and at work even before the seventh century. Although, naturally, the evidence is not all one-way, an underlying downward trend, including culturally, to me seems to characterize the whole of the old Mediterranean world from at least the third century onwards.

[1] Archaeological evidence for depopulation and the decline of living standards, esp. between the 5th and the 7th cent., is discussed in Liebeschuetz (2001: ch. 12).

According to the frequently cited figures of J. C. Russell, the population of southern, central, and western Europe fell from 21 million around the year 500 to 14.5 million around the year 650. But thereafter, the same population started to grow again, to 29 million around the year 1000 and 60.5 million in the mid-fourteenth century, prior to the onset of the great plague.[2] Even that stopped the growth of the population of Europe only temporarily: within 100 years a strong upward trend was restored.

4.1.1 Economic renewal: the millennium of mills

A favourable evolution of the climate seems to have played a role here,[3] but technological advances may have been far more important. Ploughs were improved in the second half of the first millennium, which was the more necessary as the soils of northern Europe are heavier than those of the Mediterranean basin. Wheeled ploughs made it possible to regulate the depth of the furrows, plough shares made of iron or covered with iron made for greater efficiency and durability of the equipment. Mould boards served to turn the soil opened up by the plough shares. The type of yoke used in the pre-christian Mediterranean world was suitable for oxen but less so for horses, since if the load was heavy it asphyxiated them. It was only the introduction of the horse collar that permitted horses to be used for ploughing, for which they are better suited than oxen, and for pulling heavy carts. (The horses known to the pre-christian *pólis*-world—and, presumably, the Roman world, too—were considerably smaller than the breeds to which we are used nowadays, and ill-suited for ploughing and heavy loads in any case; conversely, to plough the lighter soils of, e.g. Attiké, mules could be used as well as oxen.)[4] No more than the horse collar did the pre-christian Mediterranean world have horse shoes or stirrups. They arrived in western Europe in the ninth or tenth century, having originated, like the horse collar, in Asia. Stirrups allowed the rider to handle his weapons more effectively, and also enabled him to wear heavier armour, for which the breeds of horses by then available were large and strong enough. More importantly, from an economic point of view, horse shoes further increased the efficiency of horses as draught and pack animals.[5]

But a still more significant and basic factor contributing to the economic and demographic dynamism of Latin christendom and indeed *ancien régime* Europe right up to the onset of industrialization was the spread of watermills. The old Mediterranean civilization was run on very little energy. By the end of the *ancien régime*, Europe had far more energy available to it than did the Graeco-Roman world; the reason was mills. Though we are familiar with the enormous impact on society of the increased availability of machine power resulting from the invention of the steam engine, the fundamental importance of the history of milling for the evolution of western civilization, including its political structures, is far from having received the attention that it deserves.

The kind of grain that, from its inception in the Greek world, has been the main nutritional basis of western civilization cannot be eaten raw, nor can it be cooked (or baked) as it is. It has to be ground first, for which mills are needed. In the pre-christian Mediterranean world, for a long time milling was done by hand. A significant portion

[2]Figures by J. C. Russell, quoted in Bauer and Matis (1988: 80).
[3]Contamine et al. (1993: 151, cf. 293); Gies and Gies (1994: 43).
[4]Sallares (1991: 312, cf. 399).
[5]Cipolla (1993: 138–9); Duby (1977: i 204–7); Gies and Gies (1994: 44–7, 55–8); Halsall (2003: 173–4).

of the available labour had to be invested in milling. '[F]ifty slave women he had in the house, of whom some grind the yellow grain on the millstone, and others weave fabrics, or, as they sit, twirl the yarn': in describing the residence of the king of the Phaiaks, a very grand lord with whom Odysseús is staying at one point in the course of his travels; Homer in the eighth century BCE lists milling as the first of two major tasks of the slave women, before the production of textiles.[6] The royal residence of Odysseús himself, on the island of Ithákê, is somewhat less grand, requiring less flour: at the mills there 'twelve women in all plied their tasks, making meal of barley and of wheat, the marrow of men'. When Odysseús, unrecognized, returns after a twenty-year absence, he overhears one of those women curse her bone-breaking work late at night—being the weakest, she is still busy with it even as the others have gone to sleep. She interprets a distant thunder as an omen from Zeus that the days of the suitors, who have taken over the royal residence while they are trying to get queen Pênelópê to marry one of them, are numbered.[7]

For this woman, reducing the number of mouths to feed was the only way to lessen her workload. It was not until many generations later that the harnessing of water power and wind power would set free an enormous amount of labour that, like hers, hitherto had unavoidably been tied up in milling. Moreover, once this technology had been established, it proved the catalyst for many further improvements, liberating still more labour while at the same time increasing productivity in every production process to which it was applied. Slow to get under way in the Graeco-Roman world, in the period of Latin christendom this development eventually gained enormous momentum.

4.1.1.1 *Tentative beginnings: watermills in the Greek and Roman world*

The mills operated by the women mentioned by Homer had an upper millstone or runner stone that was moved back and forth across the lower millstone, the grindstone or bedstone (sometimes spelled 'bidstone'). Such mills consumed a lot of muscle power, since the runner stone had to be continually stopped and re-accelerated, a great waste of momentum. Even with the levered version that appeared some time after Homer, the back-and-forth movement of the runner stone remained intrinsically wasteful of energy. The invention of revolving mills—operated by hand, or by draught animals—was thus a breakthrough in itself. Here, the milling could be carried out in one continuous movement. Not introduced until the fourth century BCE, revolving mills were also the prerequisite for the invention of watermills, which appeared in the third century BCE at the earliest.

Millstones have to be horizontal. In the simplest type of watermill—the turbine mill—the mill wheel, built like a propeller or ship's screw, is horizontal, too. Linked to the revolving runner stone by a vertical axle, it requires no gearing. More refined than the kind of turbine mill common in parts of Europe in the more recent past, the Roman mill complex of Simitthus (Chemtou in what is now Tunisia) consisted of three circular shafts of masonry that ensured that no water could bypass the horizontal mill wheel at the bottom, while also acting as pressure tanks. Water was fed into the shafts tangentially, giving it a circular movement from the start and, because the ducts were tapered, accelerating it in the manner of a jet. The water came from the Bagrada

[6]Homer, *Odyssey* 7.103–4 (1995: i 253–5).
[7]Homer, *Odyssey* 20.105–19 (1995: ii 287–9).

river (now Oued Medjerda), which was dammed at this point by a collapsed bridge that archaeologists think was last restored in the late third century. Evidently the mill complex was built later, yet seems to have been abandoned as early as the first half of the fourth century. A nearly identical complex at Tichilla (now Testour) on the same river has been dated to the same period. However, no further example of this type of mill has yet been discovered anywhere, either from the Roman period or of later date, suggesting that it was the work of a local inventor that failed to spread beyond its area of origin. If it had spread, the technology, as efficient as it is simple even as it seems to bear the signature of an experienced engineer, would no doubt have continued to be employed after the demise of the empire, so that recent examples of the same type would have been found.[8]

The type of mill wheel most familiar from Europe and North America is vertical (i.e. the axle is horizontal). This requires gearing to transform the vertical rotation of the waterwheel into the horizontal rotation required for milling. The two basic varieties of the vertical mill wheel are the undershot wheel and the far more powerful overshot wheel. In the case of an undershot wheel, the water hits the wheel paddles in the lower section of the wheel, which can simply be hung into the current. It thus requires little site preparation, least of all in the case of the ship mill, which has an undershot wheel mounted between two pontoons anchored in a river and which in much of Europe was a familiar sight well into the nineteenth century. The water for running a mill can also be supplied by a mill race, indispensable in the case of the overshot wheel, which the water hits from above. If the mill race makes the construction of the mill more complicated, in return it makes it possible to control the water flow (by means of a weir), and to tap even quite small streams. In the case of the overshot wheel, a big additional advantage is its high power output.[9]

It is generally taken for granted that the overshot wheel was known in the Roman period, but the evidence to me seems to point the other way. In *Capital* (Chapter 15 Section 3b), Karl Marx cites a poem[10] by Antípatros of Thessaloníkê dating from the latter part of the first century BCE and which Marx presents as an early example of machine power being regarded (wrongly, in his view) as enabling people to work less. He quotes the poem in the 1782 German translation of Christian zu Stolberg, rendered as follows in the 1887 English edition of *Capital* edited by Friedrich Engels:

> Spare the hand that grinds the corn, oh, miller girls, and softly sleep.
> Let Chanticleer announce the morn in vain!
> Deo has commanded the work of the girls to be done by the Nymphs,
> and now they skip lightly over the wheels,
> so that the shaken axles revolve with their spokes
> and pull round the load of the revolving stones.

[8] According to Andrew Wilson (1995), a mill find at Kaisáreia in Palestine is wrongly considered to be of the Simitthus type. Nor should that be confused with the so-called drop-tower mill. Here, a round masonry shaft serves as a pressure tank for the water driving the mill wheel (collecting the water in this fashion means that even small streams can be tapped, if only in mountainous terrain), but the wheel is not built into the shaft itself. Common until recently in the Near and Middle East and in northern Africa, this type seems to be a post-Roman invention.

[9] I shall not discuss other varieties of mill wheel such as the breast wheel and the pitch-back wheel, which appear not to have been common in Europe before the 19th cent.

[10] *Anthologia palatina* (*Anthologia graeca*) 9.418.

> Let us live the life of our fathers, and let us rest from work
> and enjoy the gifts that the Goddess sends us.

'Deo'—Dêô—is the Homeric name for Dêmḗter, goddess of grain, but also in charge of the nymphs, who in Greek mythology were water spirits associated with sources, streams, and the like. The Greek text describes the nymphs as *kat'akrotátên halloménai trochiḗn*, which may be rendered as 'jumping (or skipping) along the topmost (or outermost) (part of the) wheel'. Andrew Wilson,[11] in claiming that the phrase means 'jumping down onto the topmost part of the wheel', and that the nymphs are simply identical with the water, overlooks the alternative reading adopted by Stolberg. This has the nymphs 'skipping over', or dancing on the wheel, as if rejoicing in the power of the water, from which they are distinct, but with which they are associated. That seems more in keeping with the traditional image of nymphs, and is applicable to either type of vertical mill wheel: even if the water flows underneath the wheel the nymphs can still frolic on top of it. The poem is thus entirely compatible with the assumption that the overshot wheel was *not* yet known, and no proof at all that it was.

Wilson further points out that Antípatros is alluding to a geared mill, and that this rules out a horizontal mill wheel since that does not require gearing. In fact, it does not follow that such a mill cannot be geared; archaeological evidence of a second-century geared horizontal mill will be cited in a moment. In Antípatros' poem, it is not the fact of gearing that rules out a horizontal mill wheel but its kind. The reference to gearing consists in the words *aktínessin heliktaís*, a dative of instrument which literally means something like 'by means of rotating (or: swirling) rays'. Wilson believes this to be a reference to ' "encircling" or "rotating" cogs'. That seems to be stretching the meaning of the word 'rays'. Stolberg, more correctly I think, has 'the shaken axles *revolve with their spokes*', where the words in italics correspond to *aktínessin heliktaís*. He may have got the image of spokes from the 'rays'—something *radiating* outwards from a centre, as spokes of course do: indeed *radius* is the Latin for 'spoke'—being described by Antípatros as 'rotating' or 'swirling', like for example the rotating spokes of the carriage wheels with which Stolberg (1748–1821) would have been familiar.

But where are the spokes in a mill? In the mill wheel? Perhaps Stolberg thought so, but there is another solution. In the 1940s, archaeologists discovered the remains of a watermill belonging to a second-century Roman *villa* (a country estate) near Hagendorn in the Swiss canton of Zug. Part of the finding was at first identified as wagon wheels: wooden rods looking very much like spokes radiating from axles. On closer examination the spokes seemed rather short for wagon wheels. There was no trace of a rim, and the axles turned out to have been connected to a waterwheel and a revolving millstone, respectively. The contraption was identified as what the archaeologists' report (not published until 1991)[12] calls a *Sterngetriebe* or star gearing: the axles were set at right angles, geared together not by means of cogs but by means of the pointed 'spokes' inserted into (and thus radiating from) sturdy discs around the axles. As the spokes were quite numerous, even a relatively slow rotation would produce the 'swirling' effect that Antípatros may be alluding to. No one seems as yet to have established a connection between Antípatros' poem and the Hagendorn find; but I suspect that he had a star gearing in mind.

[11] Wilson (1995: 504–5).
[12] Gähwiler and Speck (1991).

With a star gearing, at least of the Hagendorn type, both axles turn at the same speed. It is apparently still found, or was found until recently, in the Near and Middle East—not for milling, but for pumping water: think of a vertical waterwheel, with buckets on the rim scooping water, and driven by a donkey turning a horizontal wheel. Here, the fact that the waterwheel turns no faster than the donkey walks presents no great disadvantage, there being no need for the waterwheel to rotate particularly fast. In milling, however, the faster the rotation of the millstone the better. Clearly, the star gearing documented at Hagendorn and, with some likelihood, described in Antípatros' poem, represents an early stage of watermill technology. This is in keeping with the fact that Antípatros adopts the pretence of telling the 'miller girls' something new. Of course, real mill operators would not have needed a poet to advise them of this new invention. At the same time, however, if the invention had been around already for generations, the poetic pretence would not have worked.

In interpreting Antípatros' 'rays' as 'cogs', Wilson was no doubt influenced by a famous passage in Vitruvius (10.5.2), which describes a gear box for a mill driven by an undershot waterwheel. Vitruvius unambiguously speaks of 'toothed discs [*tympana dentata*]', of which the one on the axle driven by the waterwheel was the larger (*maius*): in other words, the millstone rotated faster than the waterwheel. It is striking that Vitruvius was familiar with this kind of gearing, much more suitable for milling than the star gearing, but Antípatros writing more or less at the same time apparently was not. Vitruvius was an expert engineer. Antípatros, on the other hand, must have based himself on what he was seeing around him, which suggests that the relatively few watermills that he was able to inspect (they must have been relatively few or he could not have presented them as a novelty) typically had the more primitive star gearing.

Both Vitruvius and Antípatros were active in the second half of the first century BCE. Wood from the Hagendorn mill has been dated with the help of the tree rings: it was cut in the year 176 CE. So even then news of the superior gearing described by Vitruvius had not reached the Hagendorn *villa*. The reason for this was not its geographical remoteness from the core areas of the Graeco-Roman world, since evidence of more advanced technology from the same period has been found still further north. In 1912, archaeologists discovered the remains of a Roman mill at Zugmantel near Frankfurt-am-Main, on the very edge of the Roman empire. Situated on a hilltop and associated with a Roman fort, this mill was not water-powered but turned by humans or animals. Yet it possessed a whim: a gearing with wooden gear wheels of different size but parallel axles. In other words, the sole purpose of this gearing was to speed up the rotation of the millstone, not—as is necessary in a watermill—to convert the vertical rotation of the waterwheel into the horizontal rotation required for milling. In 1996, another Roman mill was found near Aschheim in Bavaria. Consisting of a wooden frame, about a metre high, that supported the millstones, it had a metal crank turned vertically by hand and a gearing that, if the archaeologists have reconstructed it correctly, already looked exactly like the standard mill gearing of the late pre-industrial age. A large cog turned by the crank was geared to a small pinion on the axle of the millstone, which therefore rotated much faster than the crank. This pinion—like the Zugmantel one—was not toothed, but of the 'lantern' type, a trundle: two parallel discs connected by sturdy cylindrical bars along their rim. The large cog of the Aschheim mill likewise was not toothed along the rim but, like the standard large cog wheel employed by the millwrights of the *ancien régime*, consisted of

short, thick pegs set vertically into the rim on one side of the wheel but without sticking out beyond its circumference.

This gearing is not the one described by Vitruvius. The problem with toothed cogs (*tympana dentata*) would have been to keep them geared precisely to each other, since the pressure brought to bear on them by the inertia of the waterwheel and of the millstone, and the torque of their axles, would easily either shift them out of position or cause damage to the teeth along the rim—a late *ancien régime* gear wheel for a mill would typically have replaceable teeth and pegs made from softer wood (such as fruit wood) than the wheel frame so that in the event of some mishap they would shear off without damaging the frame. The shorter the teeth, the more robust the cogs. Short teeth required a sturdy construction ensuring that the cogs were held in position securely, since even a little play would incapacitate the machine. Long teeth allowed for more play but were more easily breakable. A star gearing (which as it were consists of very long teeth) allowed for maximum play but would have been least pressure-resistant. Clearly, the abandoning of protruding teeth in the gearing of the Aschheim mill is the fruit of some experience with milling and of adaptation to the stresses to which the machinery is exposed—and that despite the fact that, as I think is likely, the overshot wheel with its high energy output had not even been invented. The torque exerted by an overshot wheel is notoriously high; probably too high for a star gearing. The 'circumference gearing' represented by the Aschheim mill is less affected by torque. Used even for a handmill as in the Aschheim find, it is no indication that the overshot wheel was known—though it was a precondition for its eventual introduction.[13]

Both the Zugmantel mill and the Aschheim mill are dated by the archaeologists to the second century, which means that they are roughly coeval with the Hagendorn mill. The coexistence of the advanced gearing of the former two with the primitive star gearing of the latter to my mind suggests that advanced milling technology, which all three of them display (the Hagendorn mill by virtue of its power source), was rare, preventing the emergence of a common technological standard. Perhaps this also explains why (apparently) innovative technology such as that found on the Bagrada river failed to catch on and spread to other areas.

When the Goths besieged Rome in 537, they cut the aqueducts serving the city. This did not lead to any shortage of drinking water, only to the closure of the public baths. More inconveniently, it caused a shortage of flour: served by one of those aqueducts, the Aqua Traiana, the watermills on the Ianiculum hill (now Gianicolo) were left without power, forcing the defenders to build ship mills on the Tiber. The historian Prokópios, in his eyewitness report of that war, speaks of the Ianiculum as 'a great hill where all the mills of the city have been built from old, because much water is brought by an aqueduct to the crest of the hill, and rushes thence down the incline with great force'.[14] Still in good condition, the Traiana now supplies a monumental fountain on the slope of the Gianicolo built in 1605 by pope Paul V. Since the aqueduct brings water to a hillside, there is so much height of fall available here that any late *ancien régime* engineer commissioned to use this water for driving mills would as a matter of course have equipped them with overshot wheels, which require a lot of head (the difference in height between the

[13]The Zugmantel find is illustrated and discussed in Baath (1994); on this find cf. also Gähwiler and Speck (1991: 62–3). Aschheim: Volpert (1997).

[14]Prokópios of Kaisáreia, *Pólemoi* 5.19.8 (1968: 187).

'headwater' upstream of the mill and the 'tailwater' downstream) but yield far more energy than undershot wheels. A third-century complex of mills drawing on the water of the Traiana and partly excavated in 1998 is the only evidence of the Roman mills of the Gianicolo so far discovered. It was equipped only with undershot wheels.[15]

Overshot mill wheels are generally assumed to have turned in the great mill complex of Barbégal near Arles in southern France, variously dated to the second, third, or fourth century. An aqueduct brought water to a ridge overlooking a plain. As the water leapt downhill over eight terraces set into the hillside, it apparently powered twin mill wheels, separated by a stairway, on each of those terraces. Almost nothing now remains of the architecture of the complex, so not only is it not clear how the machinery was housed, but also there is nothing to indicate what type of mill was employed here. If the many reconstruction attempts unanimously posit overshot wheels, it is because their authors assume the Roman builders of the complex to have realized that overshot wheels are the most energy-efficient and that the height of fall provided by the hillside practically cries out for them. But on closer examination that assumption seems questionable.

The total height of fall available here is 18.6 m, or 2.33 m for each of the eight wheels: for overshot wheels, that is just about feasible, but suboptimal. 2.33 m corresponds pretty much exactly to the minimum head of four 'ells' (*Ellen*) posited for overshot wheels in the self-consciously scientific handbook on milling technology of Leupold and Beier of 1735—anything less, the handbook explains, and the wheels would have to be very broad. More recent literature tends to give a slightly higher minimum (such as 2.5 m). But overshot wheels are the more powerful the larger they are—where enough height of fall was available, in the late *ancien régime* they routinely had a diameter between 5 and 10 m. Anyone wanting to operate overshot wheels on this site and who knew what they were doing would have built seven terraces at most, and almost certainly fewer. That of course would have meant fewer machines, too—but more powerful machines, with less construction and maintenance effort: thus, if the mills were gristmills (as fragments of millstones on the site indicate), with larger overshot wheels their throughput of grain would have been higher.

Now what about simply positing undershot wheels (or 'breast wheels', which the water hits halfway up their total height, and which the archaeologists' report on the Hagendorn mill speculates may have operated both there and at Barbégal)? All difficulties disappear: 2.33 m of head is ample for them, nor would there have been a premium, in this case, on having larger rather than more wheels: larger undershot wheels would have made sense in a big river with its unlimited supply of feeding water, but not given a relatively sparse supply as here (overshot wheels do not have this problem as they make better use of limited feeding water). Even though, at Barbégal, overshot wheels would have been physically possible, they would indicate a lack of expertise concerning them. The set-up with its eight terraces more plausibly suggests a scenario in which whoever planned this site was, as a matter of course, thinking in terms of undershot wheels (or perhaps breast wheels)—quite likely because overshot wheels were as yet unknown.[16]

[15] Wilson (2001).

[16] For a critical discussion of the Barbégal complex, see Roos (1986); for a typically absurd reconstruction of the complex, see Hodge (1990) (Hodge sinks the lowermost of the eight overshot wheels that he posits halfway into the ground to gain some height of fall and then posits an—undiscovered and wildly impractical—underground drainage for the run-off); for the suggestion of breast wheels, see Gähwiler and Speck (1991: 72–3).

4.1.1.2 *Takeoff: water and wind power as the motor of post-Roman western civilization*

What drives overshot waterwheels is almost exclusively the weight of the water filling the cell-like compartments or 'buckets' along their rim and pulled down by the force of gravity, rather than the impetus of the current captured by the paddles of undershot wheels: in the jargon of physics, undershot wheels are powered by the kinetic energy of the water, and overshot wheels by its potential energy. That overshot wheels are the more efficient type is not intuitively obvious—especially as they turn slowly, as if lazily. To understand why they are more powerful one has to remember that the impetus provided by flowing water is likewise solely due to the force of gravity (for doing which of course it is necessary to have the concept of gravity in the first place, as, if I am not mistaken, the Graeco-Roman world did not).

Unless we are talking about a waterfall, a natural watercourse like a stream or river has only a moderate to imperceptible incline. Whereas in a horizontal waterwheel the Coriolis force may play a minor role depending on its construction, what drives a vertical waterwheel, of any construction, is ultimately the force of gravity and nothing else; and that force is the greater the greater the incline along the distance over which the water acts on the waterwheel. With this in mind, it becomes clear why, given the same quantity of water acting on the wheel per unit of time, the overshot wheel makes more efficient use of it than the undershot wheel. The vertical distance travelled by the water while it pushes the overshot wheel is far greater. Moreover, trapped by the 'buckets' of the wheel, the water cannot escape from acting on the wheel, whereas part of it does just that in the case of the average undershot wheel (unless there is a mill race and the wheel is encased to keep all the water acting on the paddles). The energy output of a waterwheel is the product of the weight of the water acting on the wheel per unit of time and the vertical distance that the water travels while acting on the wheel. Other things being equal, an undershot wheel turns faster than an overshot one, which means that during the same period it 'processes' more water than does the overshot wheel. This in part compensates the fact that it operates with a far lesser height of fall. Nevertheless, the energy output of the overshot wheel is several times (five or more) that of a comparable undershot wheel.

The overshot wheel is subject to greater constraints than the undershot one, which means that not infrequently only an undershot wheel is possible—starting with the necessary minimum head that in flat terrain is usually not available. Further, the slow rotation of the waterwheel necessitates a gearing with a high speed ratio to ensure that the upper millstone rotates fast enough. Moreover, less incline in a watercourse often means more water—a torrent in the mountains carries far less water than a mighty river in the plain. If the discharge (quantity per unit of time) and flow rate of the feeding water is not a problem, the low energy output of an undershot wheel can be compensated by simply placing a number of them one after the other, since each 'uses up' so little head. Alternatively, in the case of a ship mill, or a mill built between the pillars of a bridge as also was often done in Latin christendom, it is possible to equip it with a very broad wheel, or again use several, set side by side.

In the famous passage cited earlier, Vitruvius explains that the mills discussed by him were powered in the same way as the bucket wheel (for irrigation) that he describes immediately before; this was, and to some extent still is, common in the Near and Middle East. Known as *noria* in Arabic, it is basically a paddle wheel driven by the current—that

is, with respect to the way it is powered it is an undershot wheel. Since mill builders were initially interested in a power source, a source of rotational kinetic energy for milling, and since it is the paddles, not the buckets, that cause a bucket wheel to turn, it is easy to see why they happily adopted the paddle wheel for milling and did not bother to reflect whether an even better, if less obvious, power source might not, as it were, be hidden in the buckets, which instead were got rid of. (The breast wheels that may have operated at Hagendorn or Barbégal would have had paddles like undershot wheels, not buckets like overshot wheels.) The buckets of a *noria* empty the water scooped out of the river that makes the wheel turn into a conduit connected to an irrigation system. It seems to have required more lateral thinking than anybody could be bothered to invest in to grasp that instead of powering the wheel—by means of paddles pushed by the current—to empty the buckets it was possible to do the reverse: fill the buckets to power the wheel. This leap of the imagination was the less likely as the kind of river powering a *noria*—like the Orontes (in Arabic, Asi), where they are still quite numerous—did not permit overshot wheels owing to its slight incline. Most likely, the requisite mental breakthrough came only once watermills had become ubiquitous, which in the Roman world was not yet the case, and were routinely experimented with by a considerable number of people specializing in their construction.

Watermill technology was less simple than in retrospect it may appear. By the standards of the pre-industrial age, the overshot mill, in particular, set free a vast amount of kinetic energy, which could cause havoc if not controlled properly. We have already discussed the need for sturdy gearing. By the late *ancien régime*, a good watermill would have a large 'pit wheel'—so-called because it was often partly sunk into the floor of the mill house—mounted on the same axle as the waterwheel. The pit wheel was geared to a small pinion and thereby drove a horizontal 'great spur wheel', a large, fast-revolving toothed wheel on the floor above and mounted on the same vertical axle as the pinion. The spur wheel in turn meshed into the 'stone nut', another small pinion driving the runner stone (or several, each with its own pinion and set along the circumference of the spur wheel). The double transmission ensured that the runner stone rotated twenty-five to thirty times faster than the waterwheel: for milling flour with horizontal millstones a minimum of some fifty revolutions per minute is apparently necessary, but a good mill in the late pre-industrial era would achieve 120 or so. That required sturdy metal bearings lest some fast-spinning axle pierced its worn-out bearings and set the wooden machinery on fire. Nor is a millstone indestructible: the stresses on the stone rise as the square of its rotational speed. There was a considerable risk of its disintegration, and a lump of stone with an average weight, in the late *ancien régime*, of two to three tons breaking up as it turns at high speed is not an experience one would want to repeat. Moreover, a high-quality millstone—often imported from far away, and made up of several pieces joined together—could cost a small fortune. It was commonly secured with iron hoops around its circumference.[17]

The higher the rotational speed of the runner stone, the more important was it that it never touch the bedstone, even though at the same time the distance between them has to be minute. If the two were to touch, not only would the result be stone grit mixed into the flour, but the valuable grinding surfaces would be damaged. In the Graeco-Roman world,

[17] Belmont (2002) offers invaluable information about the millstone industry in *ancien régime* France (discussing e.g. dimensions, provenance, methods of transport, and prices).

millstones were conical, the inclined grinding surfaces forcing the grind to travel across them under the pull of gravity. Developed for querns, they were also used at Hagendorn or the third-century mill complex on the Gianicolo, indicating either low-powered, slow-moving millstones or a failure to grasp that with high-powered, fast-moving millstones the centrifugal momentum is sufficient to pull the grind across the grinding surfaces. Millstones in *ancien régime* Europe were exactly level and inscribed with an intricate pattern of straight or curving sharp-edged lines. Wide-profile lines brought in air to cool the grist and prevent it from being roasted during the milling process. Other lines broke up the grist and directed it along as long a route towards the outer rim as possible (or a less long route if groats rather than flour were desired). The lines needed to be regularly resharpened, and the surfaces between them roughened since the milling process polished them—unless one invested in high-quality millstones of hard, small-pored material, such as the burrstone of La Ferté-sous-Jouarre (on the Marne river east of Paris) or the lava stone from the Eifel hills near Mayen. As even prolonged wear would never render their surfaces smooth, millstones from those two places were so sought after that they could be exported widely, including to England—where in the pre-Reformation period millstones from the Mayen area were known as 'Cullen' stones because they were marketed (via the Rhine) by merchants based in Cologne.[18]

To keep the runner stone at just the right distance from the bedstone, a tentering mechanism was needed to permit it to be lifted and lowered with millimetre precision. It was in a raised position while the mill was being powered up; only when it reached the required rotational speed was it carefully lowered into the desired position, almost touching the grindstone but not quite. Keeping it in this position was somewhat tricky too, since its rotational momentum pushes it upwards. Since grist fed into the mill 'lubricated' the grinding surfaces as it was being ground up, it was imperative that the runner stone not turn in the lowered position when there was no grist to insulate it from the bedstone. In other words, the grist must not be allowed to run out while the runner stone was turning. This was ensured by the hopper suspended above the runner stone and feeding the grist into the hole at its centre through a 'shoe' struck by the 'clapper', a damsel connected to the rotating machinery and first recorded in an illustration of about 1480.[19] Agitating the shoe and hopper was necessary to keep the grist flowing. For added safety, a bell would be mounted inside the hopper: it remained silent as long as it was covered with grist but, owing to the rhythmic shaking of the hopper, went off when it became uncovered.[20]

Perhaps because there were as yet few watermills in the first place, and perhaps also because the absence of overshot mills meant that less energy was available in total, mills in the Roman period appear to have been employed almost exclusively for milling grain. But with mills becoming a standard appliance, and especially with overshot mills in operation, a surplus of energy meant that more and more mills were employed for other purposes as well. Concerning the Roman period, a passage in Ausonius' poem on the Mosel river of 371 is generally considered the only testimony of an 'industrial' application, beyond milling, of water power. In enumerating the tributaries of the Mosel,

[18]Langdon (2004: 169–70).

[19]Baatz (1994: 30).

[20]On the technical aspects of pre-industrial mill construction and milling see the handbook literature, e.g. Leupold and Beier (1735); Schnelle (1999).

Ausonius says of one of them, the 'marble-famed Ruwer [*marmore clarus Erubris*]', that

praecipiti torquens cerealia saxa rotatu	turning with rapid rotation the grain-crushing stones
stridentesque trahens per levia marmora serras	and pulling the screeching saws through smooth marble slabs
audit perpetuos ripa ex utraque tumultus.	from both its banks it hears a ceaseless din.

Evidently, the mills on the banks of the Ruwer were used both for milling grain and for cutting marble, and quite a lot of it too, it seems. Ausonius describes the rotation of the millstones as *praeceps*, a word that by its etymology literally designates a 'headlong' rush. This suggests that the mills in question were quite advanced. Millstones are not actually very loud, nor does their low rumble carry well, and wooden gear wheels, lubricated with tallow or beeswax, are practically noiseless. So the 'ceaseless din' must have been due to the saws eating into the marble. The same poem speaks of the grand country houses (*villae*) lined up along the Mosel, which, Ausonius says, had coffered ceilings of marble as well as floors of 'Phrygian tiles [*Phrygiae crustae*]', the raw material for the latter—popular in the Roman world—being quarried in Asia Minor (nor is marble found in the Ruwer area). The Ruwer joins the Mosel just downstream from Trier, at that time residence of the Roman emperor, Valentinian I, to whose entourage Ausonius belonged. The frequent presence of the ruler around the time when the poem was written may have caused additional demand both for flour and for upmarket building material.[21]

In the second half of the first millennium, watermills clearly spread swiftly. The abbey of Saint Wandrille-de-Fontenelle in Normandy owned 63 in about 787, the abbey of Saint Germain-des-Prés in Paris had 85 around the year 820, and Prüm abbey in the Eifel hills had 50 in 893.[22] Those mills may still have been of a somewhat primitive type, like the Hagendorn one, or even horizontal mills. But the spread was important to create the critical mass that enabled the technology to progress: the more mill owners there were, the greater the chance that some improvement hit on by any one of them would be copied by his neighbours, and spread in its turn. The *Domesday Book* of 1086 lists some 6,000 watermills in the English kingdom. It assigns each a money value, which varies enormously—perhaps reflecting, among other things, different levels of technological achievement.[23] Whereas until the eighth century more mills appear to have been given to monasteries than built by them,[24] later on the role of the great monasteries in promoting watermills seems to have been considerable. From the twelfth century onwards, it was the Cistercians in particular whose rapid expansion throughout Europe meant a boost for water power technology. The Cistercians had a strongly 'industrial', engineering-oriented streak, and liked to found their monasteries in remote areas, spreading state-of-the-art mills to parts of the continent where they were perhaps not yet known. An unknown author presumably writing in the second half of twelfth century has left a somewhat

[21] Ausonius, *Mosella* 360–4, cf. ibid. 48–9. Wilson (1995: 499 n. 2) also cites Gregory of Nýssa (died 394) '*In Eccl.* 3, 656A, Migne' as a further indication of watermills being used for sawing stone.

[22] LdM 'Mühle, Müller' (column 887).

[23] Holt (1988: 11–13). Different authors have arrived at different totals for the number of mills mentioned in *Domesday*. According to Holt (1988: 8), 6,082 is a better figure than the 5,624 quoted most often.

[24] Henning (1994).

humorous Latin description of the great abbey of Clairvaux, a model foundation and showpiece of the Cistercians and which established more daughter houses (some 350) all over Europe than any other of their monasteries, including Cîteaux itself. In a stunning display of verbal showmanship, the author devotes much space to the various production processes mechanized with the help of water power, illustrating the long way travelled since Antípatros. Whereas the Greek poet had only been aware of water power being used to mill grain, at Clairvaux, in the twelfth century, that was but one task performed by water power (though it still tops the list). Indeed the twelfth-century text spells out a *dependence* on water power that to Antípatros was as yet unknown:

That part of the river which the wall, acting as porter, admits rushes first to the mill. Careful [i.e., anxious] and troubled about many things,[25] now he crushes the grain under the weight of the millstones, and now separates the flour from the bran by means of a fine sieve [which, like the hopper, would be shaken back and forth by a damsel connected to the mill mechanism]. But already he is filling the cauldron in the next building, giving himself over to the fire for boiling so as to furnish a drink to the friars . . . [The allusion, elaborated on in the omitted part of the passage, is to the brewing of beer.] But he has not yet discharged his duties. For now the fullers, right besides the mill, are calling him over, demanding that just as in the mill he was careful [anxious] to provide nourishment to the friars, so in their workshop he by rights should see to it that they have garments, too. Nor does he object, or refuse any task that he is asked to perform: alternately, he lifts and lowers the heavy pestles, or, if you prefer, hammers—perhaps it is best to call them wooden feet, for that seems most appropriate to the fullers' business, which is jumping [in non-mechanized fulling, the fullers stomped or jumped on the fabric]. Thus, he acquits the fullers of their heavy labour, and, if a joke be permitted on so serious a topic, indeed acquits them of the penalty for their sins [expelling Adam and Eve from the garden of Eden, god, in the book of Genesis, puts this curse on them that as a punishment for disobeying him they and their descendants from now on have to toil for their livelihood]. Dear god, how much solace you offer to your poor children, lest they sink into excessive melancholy! How much relief from their punishment you grant those who are repentant, lest they risk being quashed under the weight of their labour! For how many horses broke their backs, how many human arms spent their strength in that drudgery which the river, without our doing anything, graciously takes from us, even as without it there would be no clothes for us, nor food? But the river shares himself with us, and expects no other profit of his labour which he taketh under the sun[26] than that, having diligently accomplished everything, he is free to flow away. So he sends a great many nimble wheels spinning rapidly, and emerges foaming to the point of giving the impression of being ground and softened himself. Now he is received by the tanning house, where he displays a great deal of industrious activity in the making of what is necessary to produce [leather] shoes for the friars. Then, by and by dividing himself into many branches and busily flowing hither and thither, he has a look at all the different workshops, making a point of inquiring how he might be of service: whatever needs cooking, sieving, turning, grating, watering, laundering, milling, softening, his loyalty is unfailing. At last, unwilling to earn anything but total gratitude or to admit that his accomplishments fall short in any way, he leaves everything clean.[27]

[25]The words are borrowed from Luke 10.41, where they are used to describe the eagerness with which Martha seeks to make her visitor Jesus comfortable. The Revised Standard Edn. replaces the 'careful' of the King James Bible with 'anxious'.

[26]Ecclesiastes 1.3: 'What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?'

[27]*Descriptio . . . Monasterii Claraevallensis*, Migne PL 185, 570–1, my trans.

The text illustrates that mills released a great deal of labour—which could then be employed elsewhere; at the same time productivity rose. The Greek and Roman world was not yet very good at exploiting water power—but without it there was no energy to power mechanized production processes. Contrary to a widespread perception,[28] Graeco-Roman civilization was not indifferent to technological innovation because it had slaves. Rather, with no other energy source available to power production it could not but rely heavily on human labour—which, unsurprisingly, fell first and foremost on the slaves as the least privileged part of the population, even though many craftsmen and farmers who were free men of course worked hard, too. Put simply, it was not that slaves rendered water power unnecessary, but that the lack of water power rendered their exertions the more necessary.

In fact, Roman civilization, too, went to great lengths to save muscle power—quite literally so. Prokópios, in the sixth century, was much impressed by the aqueducts serving the ancient capital of the empire: '[T]he aqueducts of Rome are fourteen in number, and were made of baked brick by the men of old, being of such breadth and height that it is possible for a man on horseback to ride in them.'[29] Figures on how long those aqueducts were are hard to come by and differ alarmingly—perhaps because the course of the aqueducts is not always quite certain, especially where they ran underground (as they normally did except when they crossed valleys or approached their end point), or because rather than taking account of every bend authors adopt a more pragmatic approach based on straight lines; generally the question seems under-researched. Roughly speaking, the shorter kind were around 20 km (12 miles) long. The longest seems to have been the Aqua Marcia at a little over 90 km (56 miles), with the rest in between. Clearly, plentiful water at sufficient elevation could be found at the shorter distance; curiously, and contrary to what one would expect, there seems to be no correlation between the age of the aqueducts (the Marcia, completed in 140 BCE, is one of the older) and the remoteness of their source.

Nor were long aqueducts the privilege of the capital. The aqueduct supplying Roman Cologne, on the very edge of the empire, is stated to have been 95 km (60 miles) long.[30] Here, there may have been less choice—unlike Rome, Cologne is situated in a plain. A previous aqueduct carrying water from low hills closer to the city seems to have been lengthened in the second century to the more remote Eifel hills, presumably because the old source was deemed insufficient. The problem was to find an abundant source—in fact, the aqueduct draws on several—at a high enough elevation for the water to flow all the way to the city by itself. It was necessary to maintain a constant slight incline (at least overall—siphons were of course possible, e.g. to cross valleys): in fact even the new catchment area is not that remote as the crow flies, but the aqueduct made a considerable detour to avoid higher ground in between and cross the watershed between the Maas and the Rhine without having to dig through it at any great depth.

All this was done to obviate the need for *pumps*. We are accustomed to regarding the great Roman aqueducts with awe. In a way this is justified—they are great works of engineering. But at the same time they bear conspicuous testimony to the fact that

[28] Reiterated e.g. by Jean Gimpel (1977: 9).

[29] Prokópios of Kaisáreia, *Pólemoi* 5.19.13 (1968: 189).

[30] Kreiner (1996: 88). Internet research on pages devoted to this aqueduct showed that here, too, different figures are in circulation (85–130 km). In this case, part of the explanation seems to be that the main aqueduct had several smaller feeders.

Roman civilization lacked the knowledge to harness energy other than muscle power. Aqueducts were not built to obtain water as such. Both Rome and Cologne are after all situated on a great river, whose vicinity meant plenty of clean groundwater at shallow depth. Aqueducts were built to obtain running water. If no more aqueducts were built in Latin christendom, it was not because technology had regressed. If, as in the Roman period, pumps could be driven only by muscle power, then building 95 km of aqueduct might appear attractive. In Latin christendom, pumps would simply be powered by a water- or windmill, available at a fraction of the cost of an aqueduct. Water or wind power was frequently employed in Latin christendom and post-Reformation Europe for pumping water—for example for irrigation, or for draining (of mine shafts, or of low-lying land reclaimed from the sea). Where in the Roman period an aqueduct would have been the only solution, Louis XIV of France had the once-famous (but now destroyed) *machine de Marly*, built in the 1680s: fourteen undershot waterwheels with a diameter of 8 m on the Seine river at Marly, driving 235 pumps that propelled water over a total difference in elevation of 165 m—their sole purpose being to feed the spectacular jets in the park of Versailles.[31]

The clichéd depiction of the Graeco-Roman world as lacking the interest in technology and innovation characteristic of the 'early modern' period may be due to a misperception of pre-industrial technology as primitive and there for the taking. In fact, the technological evolution under review here probably followed its natural, exponential trajectory independently of any cultural paradigm shift: unhindered, that is, by any indifference or even hostility to technological innovation in the pre- or early christian period. The beginnings of watermilling were necessarily slow. Precisely because it was *unaccustomed* to watermills, the Graeco-Roman world did not depend on them and thus necessarily failed to generate much pressure for perfecting the technology. A civilization in which the only machine exploiting non-muscle power to be in widespread use was the sailing ship could have no notion of the impact that the kind of technological innovation represented by watermills might have. As long as watermills were few and far between, progress was haphazard, with technological dead ends (such as, it would appear, the Bagrada mills) inevitable.

Yet in the second half of the first millennium a tipping point was at last reached when the number of mills became great enough to spur rapid technological progress through emulation, comparison, and experiment. Now, the more people saw a watermill operating successfully, the more people wanted one for themselves. From this point onwards the evolution presumably became self-reinforcing and ever faster. After the turn of the millennium, a veritable take-off is evident, of which Clairvaux abbey is one manifestation. Waterwheels powered more and more applications: fulling cloth, tanning leather, boring holes, turning wood, cutting and sawing, polishing, whetting, grinding (e.g. for making gunpowder), and stamping (e.g. to soften and pulp rags for making paper in paper mills). Mills not only produced flour and bran, but also oil. Not least important, water power was ever more evident in metallurgy. Waterwheels were used to drain and ventilate mine shafts. Trip hammers crushed the ore as well as serving in forges; rolling mills mass-produced sheet metal, wire drawing mills, invented in the early fifteenth century, mass-produced wire. And waterwheels made possible the construction of blast furnaces.

[31] Suppan (1995: 49–51).

Since the beginning of the iron age, iron ore had been smelted in small, charcoal-fired 'bloomery' furnaces, oven-like contraptions which were not hot enough actually to liquefy the metal. Rather, such furnaces initiate a chemical reaction that separates the metal by making the oxygen in the iron oxide of the ore react with the carbon monoxide building up in the oven to form carbon dioxide. The metal precipitates as blobs of 'bloom iron' of a dough-like consistency, which has to be processed immediately to remove slag particles trapped in the bloom and give the metal a less compact form (such as rods or sheets) to facilitate its reheating to a temperature sufficient for forging it. By contrast, water-powered bellows enabled larger furnaces consisting essentially of a huge chimney to reach much higher temperatures and produce molten iron. Such blast furnaces appear in Sweden, a country rich in iron ore, around 1350; by about 1500 they could be found in much of the rest of Europe as well. Bloomery furnaces took many hours to smelt a rather small amount of ore. Then they had to be restocked with fuel and ore and fired up again. By contrast, blast furnaces could be restocked while in operation and, as long as this was done, produced iron continuously and in much larger quantity.

At the beginning of the second millennium, iron was still scarce and precious in Europe: the smallest scraps were continually re-forged, swords were precious heirlooms, iron ship's anchors were so expensive that, in twelfth-century Venice, several merchants would join together to *rent* them. Blast furnaces changed that. It has been estimated that the total annual production of iron in Europe rose from 25,000 tons in 1400 to 40,000 in 1500 to 160,000 in 1760 (it would reach 20 million tons in 1900 and 100 million in 1960—a typical exponential curve).[32] Needless to say, water-powered bellows also proved advantageous in smelting and forging other metal. Metal (ferrous or not) thus grew more plentiful and affordable, resulting in productivity gains in agriculture and many crafts. Metal had endless applications (e.g. horse shoes, iron ploughshares, other iron tools and gear, weapons, and armour). Blast furnaces also enabled iron canon balls to be mass-produced, rapidly pushing stone shot off the market and helping the spread of heavy artillery.

The dynamism inherent in the exploitation of water power is also evident from the fact that it became an increasingly scarce resource. Good sites for new watermills were clearly increasingly hard to come by. By the late pre-Reformation period, watermills dotted the banks even of the least suitable river. The river Niers (Neers in Dutch) is a good example. A typical river of the plain, the difference in altitude from its source near Mönchengladbach (a little to the west of Düsseldorf) to its confluent with the river Maas at Gennep just south of Nijmegen is no more than 67 m. Nevertheless, it powered a considerable number of watermills. Weirs were built to gain some head for them—but, unfortunately, reduced the head for any nearby mills upstream. The only solution was a code of conduct binding on mill owners along the entire course of the river. It was negotiated in 1487 between the princes through whose territory the Niers flowed—the duke of Guelders, the duke of Cleves, the duke of Jülich, and the archbishop of Cologne—and among other things laid down a maximum head for weirs of one and a half feet (Cologne measure, fractionally shorter than English feet), corresponding to 43.5 cm. This is rather little even for undershot wheels, and forced mill owners to build mill ponds: the ponds were left to fill up overnight or whenever the adjacent mill was not in operation, and emptied to power the mill. The rather draconian nature of this

[32] LdM 'Eisen'.

requirement, the fact that four generally quarrelsome princes managed to agree on it, and the fact that the 1487 mill code for the Niers was regularly renewed (the last time in 1841) indicate the strong pressure to have as many mills as possible on the banks of even a small, sluggish river like this.

Things were more comfortable a little further south on the river Erft, which between its source in the Eifel hills and its confluent with the Rhine just south of Düsseldorf drops 479 m. Whereas the incline of the Niers is only 0.52 per mille along its entire course, the incline of the Erft is 1.53 per mille even if its relatively steep upper course through the Eifel hills is not taken into account. Both rivers were canalized in the nineteenth century, shortening the course of the Niers by about 10 km and the course of the Erft by no less than about 30 km. Until then, they were practically equal in length at 129 km for the Niers and 131 km for the Erft (a little over 80 miles). But whereas, in the late eighteenth century, there were thirty-nine watermills on the Niers, the total for the Erft was seventy-five, so that the average distance between them was only 1.75 km (just over a mile). Whereas a mill code for the Niers proved indispensable already by the late pre-Reformation period, it was only in 1772 that the two major princes on the Erft, the archbishop of Cologne and the duke of Jülich, named a joint commission to investigate the situation of the mills on that river. The commission found that on the Erft, too, weirs were a problem, and recommended that they should be allowed a maximum head of 3 or 3.5 feet, as opposed to the 5 feet or more frequently encountered. There seems to have been no follow-up: evidently the problem was insufficiently urgent.[33]

The figures do indicate that watermills were spaced as close as possible, and no doubt often rather too close; many must have been of marginal merit. A map of mills mentioned in the 1086 *Domesday Book* shows much of England to have been densely covered in mills already at that date, with 30 mills along one 16-km (10-mile) stretch of the river Wylye in Wiltshire—but very few mills in northern England and Cornwall, though perhaps the 1086 record is incomplete for those parts of the country.[34] Of course the saturation point where no more good sites could be found was not reached everywhere at the same time, depending on topography, degree of economic development, and the legal and political situation (a powerful mill operator could defend a monopoly for his mill—a 'suit of mill' or 'thirl'—in a relatively large district). Yet it seems clear that as Latin christendom became more and more dependent on watermills, the growing scarcity of good river or stream sites intensified the pressure for technological improvements.

This phenomenon presumably underlies the appearance of tide mills, at a surprisingly early date. They apparently existed in Ireland already in the seventh century.[35] The *Domesday Book* lists one at Dover; at least 168 such mills dating from before 1500 have been identified in England and Wales, no doubt less than the total.[36] This is the more remarkable an indication of the hunger for energy generated by the widespread adoption of watermills as tide mills are particularly difficult to build. The sites are usually tricky and exposed to destruction by storms, the flow reverses its direction twice daily (usually, therefore, there would be one mill wheel for the 'inbound' current and another for the 'outbound' current), and the constant variation of the water level means that the mills

[33]On the Niers and Erft mills Kreiner (1996: 74–5, 109–14).
[34]For such a map and the figures for the Wylye, see Gimpel (1977: 11–12).
[35]Holt (1988: 133).
[36]Shaw (1984: 14).

are operational only twice during daylight hours for a rather short period. But to offset this was the fact that the tidal flow on the Atlantic and North Sea coasts is very powerful.

Easier to build than tide mills were windmills—which, in England, not infrequently came to replace tide mills when those were destroyed in a storm, being a cheaper and safer alternative.[37] They are recorded on both sides of the English Channel from about 1180 and presumably originated in that general region. Their power source, the wind, is far less reliable, and most of the time less strong, than either a good river or the tidal flow. But their advantage was that they could be built almost anywhere and that there was no limitation on the number of windmills on given sites. Unlike waterwheels, which competed with each other either directly (in the case of overshot wheels) or because their weirs took away head from the mills upstream, windmills hardly interfere with each other. Windmills were unknown in the pre-christian Mediterranean world, and the kind first found in northern Europe (later southern Europe, too), whose vanes turn a horizontal or slightly inclined axle, appear to owe nothing to the type with vanes turning a vertical axle that emerged in the Middle East in the late first millennium. The windmills of Europe, it is worth underlining, were invented only because the spread of watermills had created a hunger for cheap non-muscle kinetic energy, and because watermills (abstracting from the relatively few tide mills) could only be built along river banks, where the good sites were filling up or were inaccessible to those not living near the river. Windmills in Europe were a corollary of, and complemented, the watermills, to which they remained secondary; in particular they were ill-suited for heavy machinery and for quasi-industrial production processes that required a constant energy input. In that sense they are, above all, another testimony to the demand for energy *generated* by watermills.

The same pressure that led to the development of windmills from the twelfth century onwards may have been responsible for the development of overshot watermills as well, and perhaps at roughly the same time. If my hypothesis that contrary to the general assumption the overshot wheel was unknown in the ancient Mediterranean world is correct, then the question arises at what point in time it did appear. The earliest indisputable evidence for overshot mills that I have found is the depiction of one in a miniature dated to *c.*1225.[38]

The tendency towards growing mechanization manifest in Latin christendom has another aspect that should not be underestimated: it accustomed people to technological progress and made them look for it, including beyond the applications of water power that had started this tendency in the first place. The wiredrawing mill was invented, in the fifteenth century, at the instigation of the Nürnberg city council, which exempted investors in the project from the dues collected from mill operators. Beyond water power, the spinning wheel and the horizontal loom (both arriving from Asia in the thirteenth century) greatly increased productivity in textile production. Ultimately, inventions like printing and indeed the steam engine were the result of a mentality for which the exploitation of water power had first created the conditions—to say nothing of the fact that the enormous output of the printing presses of Europe, commonly estimated at fifteen to twenty million books in the four decades before 1500 alone, would likely not have been possible without the easy availability of inexpensive paper owed to water-powered paper mills.

[37] Holt (1988: 34, 88–9, 136).

[38] Reproduced in Langdon (2004: plate 3.3), with the source given as BL Cleopatra cxi, fo. 10.

One intuitively understands that the Greeks and Romans could not have invented the steam engine, or if they had would not have known what to do with it: they lived in a society that being non-mechanized (and low-energy) had no need for (more) mechanization (or more energy) and was incurious about it. By contrast, and thanks, ultimately, to the simple watermills described by Antípatros or excavated at Hagendorn, *ancien régime* Europe would have been unthinkable without its machines. They literally were its daily bread: the flour for the bread that everybody ate every day came mostly from water- or windmills. Meanwhile, the labour for which Homer has the miller girl curse the suitors of Ithákê and which the twelfth-century author of the description of Clairvaux abbey thanks god for delivering him from could be invested elsewhere and, often, in production processes that were likewise mechanized. Unlike the pre-christian Mediterranean world, late *ancien régime* Europe was a civilization where the steam engine was not only more likely to be invented but also could not but catch on. Significantly, in the nineteenth century, watermills were sometimes converted by substituting a steam engine for the waterwheel to power the mill mechanism: they were not that far apart. It is not for nothing that in the English language industrial plant, even if no longer water-powered, still goes by the name of 'mill', as in 'steel mill' or 'mill town'.[39]

4.1.2 Monetization

4.1.2.1 *The countryside*[40]

Technology was not the only field in which the society of Latin christendom manifested a dynamism not found in the pre-christian Mediterranean world. Even though subsistence remained the main economic aim of almost every household and community, the role of commerce gradually increased. Markets were not yet of fundamental importance for society. But they created the preconditions for the growing monetization of economic life after the turn of the millennium. That in turn caused social structures to change in a dynamic, cumulative, and self-reinforcing development, of a kind unknown to the ancient Mediterranean world.

In the countryside, the growing role of monetized exchange and the growing demand for refined products and services that local resources could not provide but which were available for sale increased the demand for money. To give but one example, the typical lordly residence of eleventh-century northern Europe, the 'motte'—a moated artificial mound with a wooden tower and palisade on top, sometimes with a 'bailey', a fortified enclosure at its foot—could be created entirely from local materials and by drawing on labour services that the local population owed the lord. The much more refined stone castles that became ubiquitous from the twelfth century onwards could not. Peasants were no stonemasons (assuming that suitable stone could even be quarried locally), to say nothing of more complicated tasks required for constructing such edifices.[41]

[39] On the evolution of water and wind power cf. also e.g. Cipolla (1993: 140–3); Contamine et al. (1993: 69–71, 85–6, 146ff., 179–82); Duby (1977: i 200ff.); Ennen (1979: 77, 234); Fossier (1991: 133–4); Gies and Gies (1994: 35, 113–17, 178, 200–3 [blast furnaces], 246 [book production before 1500], 265–7).

[40] This simplified overview over the monetization of the rural economy follows Duby (1977), Contamine et al. (1993), and Pirenne (1994: ch. 3).

[41] Contamine et al. (1993: 154; cf. 198).

As a result there was a tendency for dues in kind to be converted into monetary dues. But monetary dues were subject to devaluation by inflation, which in the long term was often dramatic. To maintain the purchasing power of the revenue from such dues, they had to be raised and new dues introduced, neither of which was easy. One response to this difficulty was a trend to convert long-term into short-term leases so they could be put up more often and more easily. On the whole and in the long run, it was the peasants who benefited from inflation, since the market price of their produce would often rise faster than their lord could put up the dues that they owed. On the other hand, transforming labour services into monetary dues benefited the lord, too. Peasants rendering labour services had no incentive to work hard, and had to be fed by the lord for the duration, the cost of which might be considerable. Moreover, labour services required of the peasants were hardly ever very heavy, and were in fact often foregone.

As peasants acquired monetary wealth, they were differentiated by it. It was mostly the richer peasants that supplied the markets, whereas the poorer peasants were obliged to earn money by selling their labour. It was they who often left their village to join the swelling population of the towns or of the new settlements that in much of continental Europe sprang up in newly cleared woodlands. Contrary to a widespread perception, the mobility of the rural population in Latin christendom was high. Leaving the village was not especially difficult. Otherwise the population of the towns would not have grown as fast as it did (or at all, for that matter, since the mortality rate in the towns was persistently higher than the birth rate), to name but the most obvious effect of this mobility.[42]

As monetization progressed, many minor lords faced impoverishment, a phenomenon that by the end of the pre-Reformation period had become widespread.[43] Inflation reduced the real value of income from monetary dues, while at the same time the cost of the lifestyle that lords would consider appropriate kept rising—a lifestyle that owed much to the example of the richer burgesses of the towns, who, as we shall see in a moment, were at the centre of the monetization process. The great plague of the mid-fourteenth century reduced the population of Europe considerably and lowered agricultural prices owing to lack of demand; they remained depressed throughout the fifteenth century. As the rural population decreased, too, and the towns remained a magnet for it (not least because salaries increased markedly and quite durably as a result of the plague), it was often difficult for the lords to find enough peasants to work the land. Indeed, monetary dues owed by those peasants might have to be lowered at a time when the financial situation of the lords required the opposite. Many minor lords therefore joined the service of greater lords for pay. Or they became 'robber barons'—a phenomenon precisely of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries (though the term is not).

On the whole, the rural economy seems to have expanded in the period between the turn of the millennium and the early fourteenth century (stagnation set in already a generation or two before the advent of the great plague). Not only was the area under cultivation extended continually, especially with the great clearances of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, but productivity increased, too: the fact that more grain was harvested was not only due to the larger area under cultivation but also to greater yields.

[42] Duby (1977: i 220); Contamine (1993: 144–6).
[43] Rösener (1982: esp. 482–6).

This phenomenon is hard to pin down statistically, yet the general tendency seems clear enough.[44]

4.1.2.2 *Long distance trade and the towns*

Progress in agriculture benefited the towns, which could not have multiplied and grown as after the turn of the millennium they rapidly did had there not been the capacity to feed them. The towns played a key role in the process of monetization. They were very different from the towns of the pre-christian Mediterranean world. Those towns had been dominated by landowners, with traders and craftsmen playing only a minor role. In the towns of Latin christendom, it was the opposite.

No more than the pre-christian Mediterranean world was Latin christendom dependent on trade for its subsistence. Even in the towns each household tried as much as possible to remain self-sufficient. Markets served to get rid of any surplus. But they did not control production, or furnish the bulk of what a household required.[45] Many townspeople, even the less wealthy, bought agricultural rents, which played a major role in covering their basic everyday needs. Under this system, peasants pressed for cash borrowed money from townspeople in return for regular deliveries of agricultural produce—for example food, fuel, and wool. At first, rents could not be redeemed and were unlimited in time; later they could be bought back and tended to be limited to the lifetime of the creditor and his immediate heirs. (The lack of any obligation to pay back the principal meant that this kind of arrangement fell outside the prohibition of loans by the church.)[46] Increasingly, too, townspeople would buy agricultural land and lease it out: again the payment might often be in kind. In seventeenth-century Beauvais, a normal household would receive some or even most of its food, fuel, wool, yarn, or cloth, and thatch for its roof, from lease revenue in kind.[47]

Although they might use markets for buying and selling, few people depended on them, least of all on markets far away. The only merchandise playing a significant role in long-distance trade that was not a raw material or comestible was cloth. But no one depended on imported cloth: it could even be woven at home. Other goods that were the object of significant long-distance trade—such as timber, wax, metal, leather, fur, wine, salt, salted fish, and grain—could be had in many places and, often, locally, too, so that there was no dependence on given centres of production. Finished products for everyday use were rarely imported but made locally.[48] To be sure, some great cities, or areas that were highly urbanized, might rely on long-distance trade for part even of their basic needs, especially grain. Thus, in late Latin christendom much grain from the southern Baltic region was exported to Flanders,[49] and the populous cities of Italy, such as Venice, Florence, and Genoa, also imported grain from far away.[50] The Hansa

[44]Duby (1977: i 215; cf. i 191–7) estimated that the productivity of the soil increased fourfold between the 9th cent. and the 12th cent. Contamine et al. (1993: 150–1) avoid giving figures, but cautiously confirm the general tendency. See also the discussion (of, among other things, the contradictory figures arrived at by B. H. Slicher van Bath and J. Z. Titow) in Cipolla (1993: 100–2).

[45]Bauer and Matis (1988: 95–6).

[46]LdM 'Rente, -nkauf, -markt'.

[47]Goubert (1977: 377–8).

[48]Pirenne (1994: 153).

[49]Contamine et al. (1993: 246); Dollinger (1989: 260–1); Duby (1977: i 241); Friedland (1991: 40).

[50]Contamine et al. (1993: 244; cf. 352, 379).

used trade embargoes as a means to exert political pressure, which might cause food shortages—especially in Norway and Flanders.[51]

But even here it is hard to speak of real dependence. Flanders in the early fourteenth century had an estimated 5.5 million inhabitants on the territory of what is now Belgium. That is more than half of the present population, at a time when Europe as a whole had perhaps a fifth of its present population. Twenty-seven per cent of the inhabitants of Flanders are thought to have lived in towns:[52] they alone can have suffered from shortages of imported grain. Norway is a still more striking case in point. It is routinely stated that in late Latin christendom 'Norway', a main supplier of dried cod, relied on imported foodstuffs, especially grain. But 'Norway' can here mean only the population of the towns, of which there were four. Among them, Bergen with 8,000 inhabitants was the biggest by far, the other three not exceeding 2,000.[53]

The towns of Latin christendom kept attracting immigrants from the countryside. Many newcomers looked for employment in the crafts. The growing labour force in the crafts stimulated the competition between them and the creation of improved or new products. On the whole, owing to a low degree of mechanisation production remained labour-intensive rather than capital-intensive. Products were handled by the same worker throughout the production process.

> Rather than division of labour there was a division of crafts bordering on the extreme. In Paris, around the year 1300, already more than 300 can be identified. In 14th and 15th-century Frankfurt more than 200 have been counted. Thus, for example, joiners, turners, coopers, millwrights, and cartwrights split off the carpenters. The reason was failure to break up the production process; for individual craftsmen were rarely sufficiently skilled to be able to make very different products of equal quality.[54]

A worker lived in the workshop of a master craftsman more like a member of the household than as an employee in today's world. The relationship between the owner of the workshop and his labour force was thus primarily personal rather than mediated by money. The special position of the master craftsman was not so much the result of his possession of productive capital than of his recognition by the local guild—whose control over access to the market (the number of master craftsmen active at a given time was normally limited) served the purpose of securing the livelihood of all its members rather than fostering competitive entrepreneurial dynamism. With their survival ensured, individual craftsmen had no pressing need to expand their business, an ambition that in any case would often have been impeded by the narrowness of their markets: joiners, coopers, etc. were found everywhere and their products thus could not be exported. So although employment in the crafts went up as the towns grew more populous, this was not accompanied by much concentration of capital in the hands of few.

Trade was different. Whereas a craftsman primarily managed labour, a merchant primarily managed capital in the form of money and stock, which he could increase without any intrinsic limit. That is what led the society of Latin christendom onto a

[51] Dollinger (1989: 70–5, 92–6, 103–11, 147–9, 386–90).
[52] Figures taken from Contamine et al. (1993: 271–2).
[53] Dollinger (1989: 59, 72–4, 317); Friedland (1991: 59ff.).
[54] Kriedte (1980: 18); my trans.

very different path of development from the ancient Mediterranean world, despite the fact that it was no more dependent on trade than pre-christian civilization. The wealth of the (agrarian) elite of the towns of the old Mediterranean civilization had been based on a finite resource: land. By contrast, the wealth of the (mercantile) elite of the towns of Latin christendom was based on a non-finite resource: capital invested in an *expanding* economy. If long-distance trade became so much more important in Latin christendom than it had been in Graeco-Roman civilization, it was not because it had become more necessary, but simply because the urban elite of Latin christendom consisted of traders not landowners.

Many burgesses came to own agricultural land when they grew wealthy, but unlike townspeople in the old Mediterranean world they were not wealthy because they owned land. Normally, when people first moved to the towns they did not own much at all. Instead, their wealth was generated by selling something, which they therefore had an interest in doing as much as possible. Nor, unlike the situation in the ancient world, was there anyone trying to prevent traders from rising to the top of the social hierarchy at least *within* the towns, since the great landowners mostly did not reside there and left the towns pretty much alone. Further, there was nothing to stop mercantile wealth from growing and the richer traders from leaving their less successful colleagues ever further behind—as a result of which by the end of the pre-Reformation period we have the phenomenon, unknown to the ancient world, of super-rich traders like the Medici or Fugger families, who operated across Europe and whose wealth was greater than that of most princes. Among traders, competition led not so much to differentiation of mercantile activity but to ever greater capital investment. This in turn stimulated the establishment of business relations regardless of distance: the more capital a merchant possessed already, the further afield he might have to look for opportunities to invest it to keep up with the competition of his peers. Wealth, high rank in the social hierarchy of the towns, and long-distance trade tended to go together. Thus, in the towns of the Hansa (which put pressure on its members to adopt similar institutional arrangements) only the richest traders were *ratsfähig*, 'eligible to the council'.[55]

As we saw, christendom was a single cultural community where no one sharing the faith could be considered an alien. Latin was spoken by all, including traders—as noted, it was the exclusive official language of the Hansa well into the second half of the fourteenth century. Nor was there much in the way of 'protectionism' from rulers: mostly, they wanted to attract traders not keep them out. It was therefore easy to extend business relations across christian Europe. The spread of the horizontal loom throughout christendom from the thirteenth century onwards provided a great stimulus to both the cloth industry and the cloth trade, on a continental scale and without precedent in western civilization. Much of the wool produced by English sheep was exported to Flanders. Much of the cloth produced there was exported to northern Italy for further processing (though much of the wool of northern Europe also went to Italy directly). The fine cloth of Italy was then in part re-exported to northern Europe, while at the same time fine cloth was also produced in Flanders itself and exported; efforts were also made to build up a cloth industry in England.[56] In the linen industry, the towns

[55]Dollinger (1989: 211).

[56]Contamine et al. (1993: 153, 183–4); Cipolla (1993: 201, 260). On the horizontal loom and its industrial application, Gies and Gies (1994: 176–9).

of southern Germany specialized in the production of fustian, a material made of both linen and cotton. The cotton was imported from the Near East, for example via Venice. The cloth itself was then sold all over Europe, and even re-exported to Asia and North Africa.[57] Cloth was thus responsible for a major part (in terms of value) of the sales in the long-distance trade of the period, not least precisely because the geographical separation of different stages of the cloth-making process meant that value was added more than once before the merchandise reached the consumer. This was not the case with products like wine, grain, timber, salt, and the like that were likewise hauled and sold across the continent, but without being processed again before they reached their final markets.

Growing production and growing long distance trade resulted in more and more money flowing back and forth across the continent. That in turn is mirrored in the evolution of supra-local finance. Paying for goods imported from far away by sending bags of cash in the opposite direction was risky, and onerous. Coins differed across Latin christendom, so importing them from far away entailed the necessity to exchange them for local coins, at a cost. To be sure, some prestigious currencies existed that were accepted practically everywhere. They *were* used for payment in long-distance trade; they were moreover necessary as a monetary standard by means of which local currencies could be compared, and as an accounting unit. Yet for traders in regular business contact with each other it made more sense to grant each other credit, only occasionally 'settling accounts'. Even then sums owed by one party to the other might be paid by means of a piece of parchment or paper constituting a title to someone else's debt. The chief instrument for cashless money transfer was the bill of exchange, which appeared in the thirteenth century; cheques and remittances, as well as clearing payments between banks, are found from about 1300. Payment in parchment or paper was not (or did not remain) limited to long-distance trade. Pierre Goubert describes how even the local businessmen of seventeenth-century Beauvais preferred a system of mutual credit to payment in cash, which occurred only rarely.[58]

A big advantage of this system was simply that it was safer than cash, since the documents circulating between business partners in lieu of cash were worthless to robbers (loss of such documents in long-distance trade was guarded against by sending several numbered copies separately). But an even greater advantage was that this system of mutual credit put at the disposal of the traders more money than circulated in cash. The currencies of Latin christendom were based on gold or silver, precious because they were rare; hence, cash was rare, too. If cash had been the only means of payment, no more goods would have been offered for sale than cash existed to buy them with (if we abstract from barter trade); and that would have meant far fewer goods reaching the markets than could be produced. To the extent that trade was financed from credit, the monetary mass increased beyond the supply of cash based on precious metal, and this was of fundamental importance as an enabling factor for trade.

Traders could grant each other credit back and forth without paying much heed to the limited availability of coined precious metal. Since only a fraction of it was ever actually transformed into cash, the total credit volume in christendom could be far greater than

[57] Ennen (1979: 200).
[58] Goubert (1977: 166).

the total amount of cash in circulation. At his death in 1693, Gabriel Motte, one of the richest traders of Beauvais, left a monetary fortune of 163,000 livres. Of that amount only 4,000 livres (less than 2.5 per cent) were in cash, the rest in paper[59]—which gives some idea of the dimensions of the phenomenon. But an augmentation of the monetary mass caused more products to be offered for sale, and the economy to grow. By contrast, in the old Roman empire, where there was little in the way of supralocal credit, the limited availability of cash acted like a straight-jacket on the economy. Debasing the coinage, the remedy resorted to by third-century Roman rulers, also increased the monetary mass, but payment in bad currency did not spur production.

Well aware of the growing role of credit for trade, the towns of the Hansa from the late thirteenth century onwards kept municipal credit ledgers as a service to merchants, both enabling them to have their claims to outstanding debts registered officially and publicly, and facilitating clearing operations (similarly, in seventeenth-century Beauvais debts and claims were authenticated by the civic authorities, or a notary). Indeed the credit volume went up so quickly that already in the fourteenth century attempts were made by the Hansa to reign in the expansion of credit-financed trade, in particular by trying—with only moderate success—to exclude credit operations involving business partners outside the Hansa. In the fifteenth century, maritime insurance developed in the Mediterranean to protect merchants from the loss of cargoes. In the Hansa, this was frowned upon, and the old method of dividing up cargoes among many owners (e.g. four, eight, or twelve *Parten*—parts—belonging to as many *Partner* or partners) clung to. Splitting the risk in this fashion was also an efficient protection but unlike the new Italian method involved no financial operations and had no effect on the monetary mass. Even bankers were frowned upon by the Hansa: no banking firms developed within it, although the Medici and other Italian companies offering financial services had branches for example in Lübeck. It is tempting to see this kind of conservatism as a possible cause of the decline of the Hansa that became manifest in the sixteenth century.[60]

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Italian banking firms were heavily engaged in financing the *English* crown. Philip IV of France also had Italian bankers: around 1300, the brothers Albizzo and Musciatto Guidi, representatives of a Florentine trading company, were so conspicuous at the French court that they were popularly known as *Biche et Mouche* ('hind and fly'). Italian bankers contributed to financing the papacy, for example by participating in the collection of 'Saint Peter's penny', a levy raised throughout christendom and destined for Rome: in the fifteenth century, the Scandinavian revenue from this source was channelled via the Lübeck branch of the Medici and other Florentine firms in Lübeck.[61] In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, trading and banking firms like, in Augsburg, the Fugger family (first mentioned in the fourteenth century as weavers and cloth merchants) and the Welser family loaned huge amounts of money to the Habsburg dynasty, while in Florence the Medici became rulers of their city and were at length accepted as princes by the royal houses of Europe (in Germany, the Fugger family also rose to princely rank).[62]

[59] Goubert (1977: 166–7).

[60] On credit and banking in the Hansa, see Dollinger (1989: 205–6, 218–19, 267–71).

[61] Schuchard (2000: 258).

[62] On credit and banking in Latin christendom in general cf. Contamine et al. (1993: 239–41, 285, 307–9, 312, 370), Cipolla (1993: 164, 180–2, 192–3); Pirenne (1994: ch. 4.4).

4.1.2.3 *Monetization and political change*

Unlike pre-christian Greek and Roman society, in Latin christendom town and country were clearly distinct in legal terms. In the old Mediterranean world, the land surrounding a town (and usually extending all the way to the borders with the land belonging to neighbouring municipalities) was as much part of that town as the central square. There was, thus, little inhabited land that was not legally part of a town. By contrast, in Latin christendom a town was clearly marked apart, both in terms of legal status and territorially, from the surrounding countryside. Here, most land did *not* belong to a town but was part of an entirely different legal sphere. A town had 'freedoms', privileges exempting it from that rural sphere, into which it had developed as a legal newcomer and within which it constituted an enclave.

In the old Mediterranean world, where trade was of limited importance, landownership determined wealth and status. Divided up among the existing citizens, the territory belonging to a town was difficult to extend for reasons discussed in Chapter 2. As a result, the citizens had no incentive to accept new arrivals in their midst, or to give much encouragement to resident non-citizens active as craftsmen or merchants: if such non-citizens became too prosperous, they might have gained too much influence, or at least made uncomfortable demands, jeopardizing the monopoly on landownership of the citizens. In a fundamental sense both the economy and the politics of a town of the ancient Graeco-Roman world were zero-sum games. A town in Latin christendom—after the turn of the millennium—was different. Here, neither an increase of the total number of citizens through immigration nor the accumulation of wealth in the hands of individual town-dwellers had a negative impact on the community. On the contrary, they strengthened it. Wealth was not based on a fixed resource (land), but on the production of goods and services, which in principle could be expanded endlessly. United in solidarity against the rural world of the lords beyond its walls, the citizens (burgesses) had an interest in being as numerous as possible, not in keeping migrants out or at least down.

Yet the greater lords also had an interest in seeing the burgesses prosper. Some early towns of the new type arose spontaneously as merchants and craftsmen congregated for example near a royal or episcopal residence. Many more towns were founded at the initiative of powerful nobles, who gave 'their' towns privileges exempting them at least partially from their rule. This was because the towns attracted money, goods, and skills that in purely rural markets would not have been available even to the lords. At least as importantly, the lords profited for example from toll revenue along the roads, rivers, and harbours used by the traders. As a result, nobody was opposed to the growth of individual towns or the growth of the number of burgesses within them or the growth of the total number of towns, since everybody profited from this expansion. In terms of game theory, this was a highly dynamic win-win situation.

The whole phenomenon was unprecedented in the history of western civilization—and it had important consequences for the evolution of its political structures. Whoever was able to 'tap' the growing flows of money between the markets of christendom gained a decisive advantage in the competition for political power. The late pre-Reformation period was a time of rapidly growing monetary dues—commuted service obligations, tolls and fees, legal fines, and taxes. They increasingly replaced (but also were simply added to) older labour dues and dues in kind. For levying such monetary dues, especially taxes, secular lords were better placed than the church. It was not clear what the church

could now 'sell' people that it had not offered before. Whereas secular lords provided protection and law courts of which it could always be argued that more was needed, the church could not offer more complete salvation than it had, or claim that the traditional dues payable to it, such as tithes, were no longer adequate. To be sure, it did introduce new 'services'—most famously, granting indulgences (that promised faster salvation by reducing the time a person had to spend in purgatory to atone for his or her sins) for a fee. But there were narrow limits to what it could do to profit from monetization.

In Latin christendom, money taxes had fallen into disuse after the end of the old (west) Roman empire, and re-establishing them after the turn of the millennium was a slow and incremental process. Secular lords therefore turned to other, easier sources of money, such as fees, legal fines, tolls, mining, and minting. The right of coinage, that is, the right to produce the coins that, as a consequence of the growth of markets, were in ever greater demand, could be an important source of revenue. Coins were stamped with the official emblem of the emitter, who in this fashion certified their metal value and vouched for it with his reputation. As pope Innocent IV in the mid-thirteenth century recognized, this was a service justifying the fact that such coins circulated at a higher nominal value than their metal value, with the emitter pocketing the difference. Even professional money changers could determine the exact precious metal content of given coins only by melting them down; the guarantee implicit in the emblem of the emitter normally made this unnecessary. Besides, coins with a high precious metal content were soft and not very resistant to wear; bits along the rim would even be cut off deliberately to gain precious metal, in spite of prohibitions. Coins used for payment would therefore be weighed rather than counted (the names of many currencies—such as 'pound', *livre*, *lira*, *Mark, peso*, *peseta*—are actually the names of units of weight).[63]

Crucially, the more money a ruler could extract from his (rarely her) subjects the better able was he to establish effective supralocal authority. This sounds banal, but it is not. For this to work two conditions had to be met that, in Latin christendom before the thirteenth century, were in fact met only in the most inchoate fashion: the economy had to be monetized, and the ruler had to be able to secure a share of the money circulating among his subjects for himself. Let us remind ourselves of two remarks by Marc Bloch cited in Chapter 3 and which characterize the situation of Latin christendom before the thirteenth century. *Là où les transports sont difficiles, l'homme va vers la chose plus aisément qu'il ne fait la chose venir à lui*—where transport is difficult it is people who travel rather than the things they want. And: *seul le pouvoir sur place était un pouvoir efficace*, only local power was effective power.[64] This was because such power was based on a right on the part of the ruler to services and dues in kind rather than money. Services and dues in kind could be consumed only at the place of their production. To be sure, goods could be shipped to places far away, and those who owed services could be made to travel, but both were practical only to a limited degree. Transporting goods was laborious, and scarcely possible if they were perishable. People who owed services could not be kept away from their homes for very long. Moreover, the 'revenue' from dues in kind or services could not be accumulated, at least not very well: stockpiles were again not possible if goods were perishable, and might not be very useful anyway since not only

[63]Favier (1980: ch. 6) is an impressive study of the coinage of the period, its peculiarities and problems illustrated through the example of France around 1300. Innocent IV quoted ibid. p. 144.

[64]Bloch (1989: 102–3, 105).

did the goods have to be transported to central storage facilities, but then transported again to where they might be needed. Likewise, a standing army was impossible to build from people whose obligation to serve was limited to six weeks per year.

Hence, until the thirteenth century or indeed later, the 'travelling kingship' of Germany, the Scandinavian and Iberian realms, Scotland, or England (already in the Anglo-Saxon period, and still more pronounced in the Norman and Angevin period, when the royal dominions comprised vast continental possessions in addition to England itself): the king and his court travelled from one estate of the royal demesne to the next to profit *locally* from the goods and services due to them. Similarly, the French monarchy was essentially limited to the region around Paris and Orléans because that was where the royal demesne was concentrated. Monetization brought massive change to this system. Replacing labour dues and dues in kind with monetary dues had evident advantages for everyone. Even the local substitution of money dues for other dues increased the circulation of money in the economy as a whole and enhanced the ability of great lords to siphon off some of this wealth for themselves. Money even in the form of coins (rather than parchment or paper) was relatively easy to transport, it was not perishable and could thus be accumulated, and it could easily be converted, at whichever time was convenient, into most other things its possessor might need or want. The ruler could now stay where he was (increasingly, a fixed central residence), and yet exercise control even over faraway places by means of paid agents of often relatively humble rank. They were much more dependent on him than vassals (who of course did not disappear overnight, indeed the 'feudal' system was not abolished anywhere in Europe before the end of the *ancien régime*).

4.2 Kingship in Latin christendom

By extending their 'reach', their ability to project power, monetization favoured greater lords at the expense of lesser lords. Other things being equal, greater (in the sense of higher-ranking) lords were better able to tap the new money flows not least simply because their authority was recognized in a more extensive area. That must be one reason for the growing focus on the 'prince' (whether that was the king or someone of subroyal rank). This new focus on a powerful ruler in effective control of a large territory is quite noticeable already in the political theory of the fifteenth century, as we shall see in looking at the thinking of Nicholas of Kues and Enea Silvio Piccolomini. The same trend is manifest in the redefinition of 'sovereignty' as absolute supremacy by Jean Bodin in the sixteenth century and the further radicalization of the concept of sovereignty by Thomas Hobbes in the seventeenth century.

At the same time, however, monetization, the developing 'cult of the prince' (as it has been called), and the success of some power-holders in establishing a more centralized form of rule did not create new political communities. Throughout the *ancien régime*, the main political units of christian Europe remained kingdoms, whether or not the crown in those kingdoms was powerful. This in turn had everything to do with the fact that throughout the *ancien régime* supralocal power, whether exercised by the crown or someone else, remained weak compared to what we are used to nowadays (we shall return to this). The most powerful *ancien régime* king would have been nothing without the voluntary submission, cooperation, and indeed adulation of his subjects; by the same

token, anyone who was powerful but not of royal status could hope to be obeyed in the long term only if they had the formal blessing of the crown. Throughout the *ancien régime*, legitimacy made up for deficient power, and because of its special status that other power-holders lacked, the fount of legitimacy was the crown. It thus remained indispensable, and continued to define the basic political units of christendom, even where (or when) it was weak.

What made a king different from all other lords, no matter how powerful, was the sacred nature of his office. Yet kingship in christendom was not sacred from the beginning. John Ruggie has pointed out that the transition, in the fifteenth century, from what could be called a multilayered, multifocal system in which no one ruler was all-important to one which focused almost exclusively on a single ruler for any given territory was quick: 'The shift came suddenly.'[65] Although the 'suddenness' of the phenomenon ought perhaps not to be overstated, there is much truth to this observation. Similarly, although it had antecedents in the first millennium, sacred kingship, the 'traditional' kingship of the *ancien régime*, seems actually to have been the result of a fairly rapid paradigm shift in the early second millennium.

4.2.1 The foil: first-millennium warrior kingship

Kingship in the second half of the first millennium had a strong military aspect. The army, often convened more or less annually whether or not it would then go on campaign, was the embodiment of the kingdom, bringing together nobles and commoners and, of course, the royal household. This was true even though a normal first-millennium army numbered in the low thousands or indeed in the hundreds. The chief role of a king was to lead his followers into combat, small scale and even symbolical as that might often be.[66] For the same reason, during that period the office could not be held by a woman—queens as rulers in their own right appear only after the turn of the millennium, as a result, precisely, of the paradigm shift in question.

The *Saxon History* of Widukind of Corvey, written in the 960s, still illustrates the old military kingship well. Its heroes are the rulers of the east Frankish realm 100 years before the reign of Henry IV, discussed in Chapter 3. Those rulers belonged to the Saxon ducal dynasty, the Liudolfingians. Henry I, the first of them to gain the east Frankish kingship, did so at an open-air ceremony in 919 attended by 'the leaders and the higher-born of the *army* of the Franks [*congregatis principibus et natu maioribus exercitus Francorum*]'. At that assembly, the brother of the late king Konrad designated (*designavit*) Henry as king 'before the entire people of the Franks and Saxons [*coram omni populo Francorum atque Saxonum*]'. It seems clear from this phrasing that the term 'army of the Franks' included many Saxons (the kingdom as such was also officially the [east] *Frankish* kingdom even though non-Franks, chief among them the Saxons, made up the bulk of its population) and that, politically, the army was the 'people' (*populus*). On being offered 'the unction and the crown [*unctio cum diademate*]' by the archbishop of Mainz, Henry declined politely—which pleased (*placuit*) the crowd (*multitudo*). 'Lifting their right hand to the sky, they [the crowd] saluted the new king by loudly shouting his name again and again.'[67]

[65] Ruggie (1993: 159, 161).

[66] Halsall (2003) offers plentiful evidence for this. On the size of a post-Roman first-millennium army, see ibid. ch. 6.

[67] Widukind 1.26.

Henry thus became king without entering a church. The crowd apparently saw nothing wrong with this; Widukind clearly approved. Received from a bishop, unction and coronation were an emblem of sacredness denied other secular lords, yet also in a way a symbol of subjection to the church, expressed by the fact that the new king would prostrate himself before the altar. Widukind seems to have considered the unction a Frankish custom, casually noting elsewhere that the Franks 'anointed Thiadricus [Theoderic, Dietrich] as their king'—clearly a periphrastic way of saying simply that they made him their king. This would have been around 530, under the Merovingians, and thus over 200 years before the actual adoption of the practice by their successors the Carolingians.[68]

Henry I was succeeded in 936 by his son Otto I, a youth whose right to the throne was controversial. Not least no doubt because he thus started from a weak position, Otto had himself acclaimed in the manner of his father, but also anointed and crowned[69]—seizing on whatever might shore up his legitimacy. If he went on to become an even more powerful figure than his father, it was because of his military successes against rebels and external adversaries. After conquering the kingdom of Italy, he had himself crowned emperor by the pope in 962—an event that would have seen him prostrate himself before the pope. Widukind, who otherwise wastes no opportunity to let the Liudolfingians shine, makes no mention of this coronation at all. He does call Otto *imperator*, but also Henry, who never used this title; in both instances the context is military victory over the Hungarians, who represented the most serious threat to both Henry and Otto (1.39, 3.49).

Rather than treating *imperator* as a dignity bestowed by the pope, Widukind implicitly (re)defines the word as designating someone who wielded power over several peoples rather than just his own, for example when he has the dying king Konrad say of Henry that he would be 'truly king and emperor of many peoples [*vere rex erit et imperator multorum populorum*]'.[70] When the *imperator* in Constantinople first occurs in the text, Widukind explains in the same sentence that 'the Greeks almost since the beginning of the world were masters of most of the nations [*plurimarum gentium domini*].' At first defeated by the Greeks in southern Italy, the east Frankish army soon scores a victory over them. 'When the people of Constantinople heard that their men had fought badly', Widukind tells us, 'they rose against their emperor and killed him . . . by having some soldier ambush him, and in his stead they raised the soldier to the emperorship. On being made king [!] he immediately released' Frankish captives held by the Greeks, and sent Otto the bride for his son that he had earlier asked for.[71]

Widukind is referring to the murder of Nikêphóros II Phôkás by his successor, the general Iôánnês Tzimiskés, in 969. In reality, this coup almost certainly had nothing to do with the conflict in southern Italy, and if Iôánnês proceeded to make peace with Otto it was no doubt simply because for a usurper not yet securely in power in the capital it was prudent to get rid of this military commitment at the empire's periphery. Besides,

[68] Widukind 1.9: *Populus autem Francorum . . . Thiadricum ungunt sibi in regem.*

[69] Widukind 2.1.

[70] Widukind 1.25. In the parlance of the period, the plural *populi*, unlike *gentes*, is not necessarily a reference to ethnically distinct peoples, but I do think that the latter meaning is implied here. Cf. Widukind 1.9.

[71] Widukind 3.73: *Populus autem Constantinopolitanus audiens a suis male pugnatum, consurrexerunt adversus imperatorem suum et . . . cuiusdam militis insidiis occiderunt, locoque domini militem imperio designantes. Constitutus autem rex continuo captivos absolvit.*

Nikêphóros, prior to his own usurpation of the throne, was also a general and anything but unsuccessful. But the gloss put on those events by Widukind is interesting in its own right. Again he uses the terms 'emperor' and 'king' interchangeably, and seems to have seen nothing wrong with a (militarily) hapless ruler being replaced by someone whose only qualification—at least that we are told of—is that he was a 'soldier'. Again, 'the people' is presented as involved in the making of the new ruler—in the Latin original, 'the people' is the grammatical subject of the entire sentence reporting the change of ruler and its circumstances. In reality, Nikêphóros fell victim to a court intrigue rather than any popular discontent; that Widukind imagines the latter reflects not the actual events but his own notion of kingship.

The hands-on warrior kingship portrayed by Widukind and clearly taken for granted by him, without any sense that its demise might be imminent, was dead a mere century later. The crown became an institution rather than a badge of power. Kings might of course still be powerful, but even if they were not they remained the focus of a great deal of loyalty. This is well exemplified by the emperor Henry IV (reigns 1053–1106), encountered in Chapter 3. As noted, he faced a succession of four anti-kings and yet held on both to the crown *and* a considerable following among his subjects, because he rightfully wore the crown and in spite of never being victorious in any of the battles against those anti-kings. It did not detract from his status that, from the mid-1070s onwards, he was prevented from ever setting foot in Saxony again, or that, with his adversaries guarding the Alpine passes, for years he was marooned in Italy. At the time of his unexpected death in 1106, he had, it is true, recently been taken prisoner and forced formally to abdicate by the last of the anti-kings, his younger son Henry. But, determined to regain the throne and by no means despairing of his ability to do so, the emperor escaped from his captivity and immediately found refuge and support with the bishop of Liège and the duke of Lower Lorraine. It is also worthy of note that the anti-kings themselves had to rely on papal backing for what standing they possessed.

4.2.2 The lord's anointed

The sacred nature of kingship, its special legitimacy, was expressed most clearly by the unction. Following Old Testament precedent, it was first introduced in seventh-century Visigothic Spain, where the crown was continually fought over by rival contenders to the throne and no stable dynastic succession developed; the point clearly was to bolster the legitimacy of whoever happened to get hold of the throne and improve his chances to hang on to it. Visigothic kingship ended as a result of the Muslim conquest of most of Spain in 711, but the unction was reintroduced in the eighth-century Frankish realm. Here, it helped compensate the Carolingians' lack of dynastic legitimacy when they usurped the Frankish kingship from the Merovingians in 751. The fashion seems to have spread quickly. It was already imitated in the Lombard realm before its annexation to the Frankish kingdom in 772, and in 787 Ecgfrith, son and designated successor of king Offa of Mercia (still alive at that time), became the first English king to be anointed—presumably as a result of the close contacts between Mercia and the Frankish court. Perhaps the last christian realm to adopt the practice was the empire of Constantinople, where the unction was apparently introduced only after the reconquest of Constantinople from the 'Latins' in 1261 and presumably in imitation of the western example; as we saw in Chapter 3, by the 1390s patriarch Antony already considered it traditional.

The unction was a church rite. Originally (in the early church) applied to the sick and as part of the baptismal rite, it became part of the consecration ceremony for bishops at around the same time it began to be applied to kings—thereby suggesting some sort of affinity between them and bestowing a quasi-priestly status on kings. Anyone standing in front of the glass case in the Vienna *Hofburg* (the former imperial palace) where the crown of the Holy Roman Empire is currently displayed may be surprised at its size. There is a famous photograph of a US soldier 'wearing' the crown, retrieved, at the close of the Second World War, from the salt mine at Grasleben where it had been put into safe storage. A cigarette in one hand, the soldier is holding up the crown with the other, since otherwise it would visibly have come to rest on the bridge of his nose, or indeed his shoulders. Made either for the imperial coronation of Otto I in 962 or that of his son as co-emperor in 967, it was meant to be worn over a mitre, reinforcing the parallel between the coronation and the consecration of bishops. The crown made for the emperor Rudolf in 1602 and which became the crown of the Austrian Empire that existed from 1804 to 1918 actually incorporates this mitre. (Conversely, the tiara, the papal crown last used by pope Paul VI in 1963, consists of a pointed, mitre-like cap—at least it is thought to have developed out of a mitre—on which are superimposed not one crown but three.)

Similarly, the early fourteenth-century choir stalls of Cologne cathedral have two special, facing seats reserved, respectively, for the pope (this was sat on by John Paul II in 1980 and Benedict XVI in 2005) and the emperor—*both* considered ex officio honorary canons of the cathedral chapter even though normally lay persons (as, despite everything, the emperor technically was) cannot be canons. This arrangement is said to date back to 1049, when the emperor Henry III and pope Leo IX met in Cologne. Until the sixteenth century, the emperor-to-be was also made a canon of Saint Peter's cathedral in Rome, and of the Lateran basilica, prior to being crowned by the pope. Elsewhere, too, the coronation ceremony became replete with references to the quasi-priestly status of kings. Besides being anointed, they were also often clothed in priestly vestments, and took communion under both kinds (i.e. both bread and wine: in the Roman Catholic eucharist, laypersons normally partake only of the bread, with the wine reserved for the clergy).

The coronation ritual as developed in the late first or early second millennium for the German–Roman crown imitated the consecration of bishops in almost every detail, including the *prostratio*: as a sign of humility and submission, the king lay face downward before the altar, his arms stretched out in the shape of a cross.[72] The *prostratio* was practised until Maximilian II (crowned in 1562) decided to omit it[73]—one suspects that Widukind, for one, found it objectionable already 600 years earlier. The mitre, too, came to be omitted at some point, its place now taken by a velvet cap that fits inside the crown and which is thought to be of eighteenth-century date. The change created a problem, noted by the young Goethe though he evidently did not realize why it had arisen. Describing, in his memoirs, the coronation of Joseph II, in Frankfurt in 1764, that he witnessed as a boy, he recalls that the crown 'jutted out over the head like a projecting roof' and had required 'a lot of padding'.[74] It seems that in the seventeenth century the emperor would usually wear the 1602 crown for ceremonial purposes other

[72] Weinfurter (2005: 107–8).

[73] Rudolph (2005: 393).

[74] *Die Krone, welche man sehr hatte füttern müssen, stand wie ein übergreifendes Dach vom Kopf ab.* Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, book V; my trans.

than the coronation itself[75]—indeed that crown (and any predecessors that it probably had) may well have been commissioned because the 'proper', tenth-century crown was simply too inconvenient. In any case, from the fourteenth to the early nineteenth century it was kept at Nürnberg, not at the imperial court—but that arrangement itself was of course facilitated by the fact that this crown was unsuited for any but the most solemn, and least secular, royal ceremony of all.

Goethe in his memoirs bears witness to the fascination that the imperial coronation still commanded in his time. He notes the 'awe and wonderment' (*Schauer und Erstaunen*) that seizes the populace thronging the streets and squares of Frankfurt as the tocsin is rung to announce the beginning of the 1764 proceedings, emotions which eventually erupt into 'a boisterous *Vivat* rising from untold thousands of throats and, surely, hearts, too'. And although he has a sharp eye for incongruous or even absurd aspects of the event, he was evidently moved himself. Touching on the psychological mechanism that made the spectacle so powerful, he observes that 'a political-religious celebration holds an immense attraction. We see the earthly majesty before our eyes, surrounded by all the symbols of its power; but, by inclining itself before the celestial majesty, it brings their union before our senses. For the individual, too, can activate his affinity with the godhead only by his subjection and adoration.'[76]

The unction—retained everywhere even after the Reformation, or even newly introduced, as in the case of the (protestant) Prussian monarchy created in 1701—placed kings in the ancient and correspondingly prestigious tradition of the Jewish kings of the Old Testament. Thus, the crown of the Holy Roman Empire portrays the Old Testament kings Solomon, David, and Ezechias. Twenty-eight statues of kings of Israel and Juda aligned in a long row conspicuously adorn the west front of Notre-Dame cathedral in Paris. The present statues are nineteenth-century replacements, as the thirteenth-century originals, considered symbols of monarchy, were smashed during the French Revolution. Unction turned kings into what the bible refers to as 'the lord's anointed', something that other secular lords could not match. Moreover, the Latin for this expression is the rather suggestive *christus domini*. (The English word 'Christ' derives from Latin *christus*, a Greek borrowing: *christós* means 'anointed' and is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word itself Anglicized as 'messiah'. According to Jewish tradition the 'messiah' would renew the *kingship* of Israel.)

In the early second millennium, the emphasis on sacred kingship began to have the result that kings were believed to have magic properties. Einhard, describing the death and burial of Charles I in 814, mentions sinister portents of his imminent demise, but gives no indication of any white magic being associated with either the living emperor or his corpse, or of any veneration of the latter.[77] Widukind similarly fails to invest Henry I or Otto I with any mythical aura. He reports their death and burial in matter-of-factly fashion, with assertions of popular grief that sound dutiful more than anything else.[78] By contrast, after the turn of the millennium, kings in Germany were thought capable

[75] See the 17th-cent. engravings reproduced in Schomann (1982: plates 4 and 6).

[76] *Eine politisch-religiöse Feierlichkeit hat einen unendlichen Reiz. Wir sehen die irdische Majestät vor Augen, umgeben von allen Symbolen ihrer Macht; aber indem sie sich vor der himmlischen beugt, bringt sie uns die Gemeinschaft beider vor die Sinne. Denn auch der einzelne vermag seine Verwandtschaft mit der Gottheit nur dadurch zu betätigen, daß er sich unterwirft und anbetet.*

[77] Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni* 30–2.

[78] Widukind 1.41, 3.75.

of influencing the weather and other forces of nature; even touching a royal corpse would bestow benefit.[79] When, after a not particularly glorious reign, the emperor Henry IV died at Liège in 1106, peasants placed seedcorns on his bier or scratched soil from his grave to improve their harvest.[80]

Kings achieving the status of saints of the Roman church have always been a rarity, as Gregory VII pointed out in a programmatic letter of 1081 asserting the primacy of papal over royal authority:

> Besides, how many are the names of kings or emperors to whom Holy Church has ordered church buildings or altars to be dedicated, or in whose honour it has ordered masses to be celebrated? Kings and other princes ought to be afraid lest they be made to suffer the eternal fires of hell to a greater extent in proportion as in this life they enjoy preferential treatment over others . . . For they shall have to give account before god for all those that were subject to their rule.[81]

For Gregory, kings were in general even worse sinners than common mortals—responsible, in particular, for so many battlefield deaths: an echo, it would appear, of the military kingship of old. The whole long letter from which the quotation is taken is a furious rejection of the tendency to treat kings as superior beings, in its way attesting to the virulence of that (as I contend, novel) trend. Indeed, the number of kings 'raised to the honour of the altars', that is recognized as saints, was about to go up sharply.

In the first millennium, no formalized canonization procedure had as yet evolved. The cult of saints arose locally and was regulated, if at all, by the local bishop. In Latin christendom before the turn of the millennium, kings who became saints all either lived in England (five: Edwin, Oswald, and Oswin of Northumbria in the seventh century, Edmund of East Anglia in the ninth century, and Edward 'the Martyr' of Wessex in the tenth century) or in what is now France (three: Sigismund of Burgundy in the sixth century and two seventh-century Merovingian kings, Sigibert III and Dagobert II). All were either murdered (the majority) or at least killed in battle (with Sigibert the single exception). The canonization of Saint Ulrich of Augsburg in 993 seems to have been the first canonization pronounced by a pope. Remarkably quickly after that, the papacy attributed to itself, and, even more remarkably, without being able to force anybody's hand in the matter was recognized as possessing, an exclusive right to adjudge saintly status. The first formal canonization of a king, Stephen of Hungary, by a pope was performed by none other than Gregory VII, in 1083—rather ironically, perhaps, though Gregory no doubt thought it entirely fitting that he should be judge of such matters. King Knud (Canute) IV of Denmark followed in about 1100. The emperor Henry II was canonized in 1146, followed by Edward 'the Confessor' in 1161, Olav of Norway in 1164, and the emperor Charles I in 1165—the latter move apparently suggested to the then emperor, Frederic I, by his close friend, the English king Henry II, who had also had a hand in pushing for the canonization of his own predecessor Edward four years earlier. The canonization of Ladislaus (László) I of Hungary in 1192 made the twelfth century the century with by far the highest incidence of the canonization of kings.

To the kings benefiting from papal canonization in the twelfth century must be added Eric IX of Sweden, a somewhat obscure figure slain in 1160. His relics at Uppsala quickly

[79] Schulze (1984: 182–6).
[80] Boshof (2000: 263).
[81] MGH Ep. sel. 2.2, VIII.21, at p. 559.

became an object of such veneration that his status as patron saint of the Swedish realm was subsequently unchallengeable even absent explicit papal recognition, which was never forthcoming. Eric IV of Denmark also became an object of popular veneration after his assassination in 1250, but efforts by his brother and successor Christopher to have him canonized came to nothing. There seems also to have been some veneration of David I of Scotland (died in 1153). He was not canonized, but his mother queen Margaret of Scotland was (in 1251), the rare case of a queen (even if she was 'only' the consort) raised to sainthood. Louis IX of France, canonized in 1297, was a straggler, no further royal canonization taking place until 1671 (when it was granted to Ferdinand III, the thirteenth-century ruler of Castile, for his part in the *reconquista*). The total of only eight saintly kings (plus at least one queen) in the second millennium again seems low, but the fact that six of those nine achieved sainthood in the late eleventh or in the twelfth century, with two more in the thirteenth, is again indicative of a cultural shift about that time.

Martyrdom was no longer necessary for a king to achieve saintly status. To be sure, Olav of Norway was killed in battle, and both Eric of Sweden and Eric of Denmark were murdered—but neither of the latter was actually canonized. By contrast, and strikingly, of those that were none but Olav died a violent death. Canonization was, in every case, supported or indeed initiated by the successors of the rulers that were to benefit from it, and in order to shore up the prestige of those successors. Edward 'the Confessor' is a good illustration. He combined an unremarkable reign with dying a natural death, a fact advertised by his sobriquet, used to distinguish him from his uncle king Edward 'the Martyr' ('confessor' is the technical term for a saint *not* put to death for his or her faith). There are no sources from his lifetime about what sort of person he was; the saintly qualities with which those campaigning for his canonization credited him are probably pure fiction. But for the twelfth-century English crown promoting him to sainthood underlined the continuity of English kingship since before the Norman conquest, and the legitimacy of the Norman dynasty to whom (unlike the unfortunate king Harold, the opponent of William 'the Conqueror') he was related. By the same token Westminster abbey, which Edward founded and where he was buried, became *the* English royal church, site of the coronation as well as royal mausoleum—despite the fact that it was just one great ecclesiastical foundation among a plethora of similar ones, many of them older and/or royal foundations as well.

From the twelfth century onwards, for kings to be credited with that major ingredient of sainthood, the ability to work miracles, not only was it no longer necessary to have suffered martyrdom, it was in fact no longer necessary even to be dead, at least if they wore either the English or the French crown. Edward 'the Confessor' of England (died 1065) seems to have been the first English monarch to be credited—if only posthumously—with the ability to heal the sick while he was alive. It was highlighted (and probably invented) in the context of the mid-twelfth-century campaign to have him canonized. In France, Guibert of Nogent in the 1120s ascribes the ability to heal the sick not only to the late king Philip I (died 1118), but also to his *reigning* successor. The next extant reference to this royal ability is by Peter of Blois in 1181, who specifically mentions the curing of scrofula. Until the eighteenth century, French and English kings practised what was called the *toucher royal* or 'royal touch', a ceremony in which those suffering from scrofula were brought before the monarch and touched by him (or her). It seems impossible to determine exactly how or when the custom

was established, but by the 1270s this ceremony had become routine at the English court.[82]

The easy arrogation, from 993 onwards, by the papacy of an exclusive, and totally unprecedented, right of canonization is another indication that the turn of the millennium coincided with a general shift in the perception of supreme authority, respected or at any rate important no matter how faraway or indeed nominal—in this case, much more so than that of the local bishop. This was headship rather than leadership, in the case of the papacy just as in the case of kingship. Thus, it was normally not the pope who took the initiative in having someone promoted to sainthood. Rather, he approved or rejected (or ignored) a local initiative, an activity very much akin to the crown granting privileges—usually at the request of the beneficiaries. Rather than initiate action, rulers mostly merely sanctioned it. To that extent their power essentially consisted in the faculty to withhold their approval, or put differently, to withhold *legitimation*.

However, putting it negatively like this perhaps misses the point which explains how this shift came about: in an increasingly complex, increasingly institutionalized society, abstract legitimacy became more important relative to the ability to control a personal following. Necessarily and quickly, in the search for a source of better, more 'competitive' legitimation one reached the top of the tree: the king, or, in ecclesiastical affairs, the pope. Their supreme rank being incontrovertible and independent of their 'practical' power, they retained, or indeed acquired, a key role even if they lacked such power. Thus, it is remarkable that the 'royal touch' evolved in both England and France at a time when the French crown was much less powerful than the English. In the same way, the weight of kingship or the papacy as an *institution* grew relative to that of the incumbent considered in a personal capacity. Not to be misunderstood, I repeat that I am talking about the relative importance of abstract, institutionalized legitimacy. This is not to say of course that the ability to control a personal following, or the personality or 'practical' power of supreme power-holders, *ceased* to be important.

In Germany, the kind of enkinging by armies identified with 'the people' as described by Widukind for the tenth century had, by the eleventh century, become unthinkable. Another discontinuity is that from the twelfth century onwards the four *gentes* (Franks, Saxons, Bavarians, and Swabians), prominent as late as the rising of the Saxons in the 1070s, practically drop out of political history and even, largely, from political discourse. They did not disappear. Indeed they are, up to a point, extant now, even though their present-day incarnations invariably represent only a fraction of their former selves in both geographical and demographic terms. For example, Austrians are distinguished—in the sense of being popularly considered completely separate—from Bavarians even though both are descended from the Bavarians of a millennium ago; in similar fashion the Swiss are distinguished from the Swabians, the inhabitants of the Rhineland from the Franks, and so on.

This is because political emphasis shifted from ethnic groups to princes, who were increasingly seen to owe their role not to the backing of their 'people' but to formal investiture by the crown. Investiture as such was not new—but its relative importance grew even as the crown was weaker than it had been in the tenth century. In fact, the stress on the *gentes* in political discourse was probably already somewhat out of date

[82] Bloch (1924); Ehlers (2000*b*: esp. 15, 18); Mousnier (1982: 76–7; 1990: 507, 523–4); Sturdy (1992); Weber (1992); but see Le Goff (1993: 17).

even in the eleventh century, masking the rapid obsolescence of those ethnic (sub-)groups and the growing importance of institutional legitimacy. If Bavaria is not as large as it used to be, it is because its ducal rulers lost much of its territory to other rulers, such as those of the 'eastern march' (of Bavaria, hence *Österreich* 'Austria', literally 'eastern realm'), themselves elevated to ducal rank by the emperor Frederic I in 1156. The area around Würzburg, a mere appendix of the territory settled by the Franks, became *Franken* (= [land of the] Franks, 'Franconia') because the bishop of Würzburg in the twelfth century managed to have himself recognized as heir to the Frankish ducal dignity (which the Franks, unlike the other three *gentes*, had never in fact had). The area around Meissen and Dresden became *Sachsen* (= [land of the] Saxons, 'Saxony') despite likewise being peripheral to the old Saxony because, when the line of the previous incumbents became extinct in 1422, the crown somewhat arbitrarily bestowed the ducal dignity of the Saxons on the margrave of Meissen. The ducal dignity of the Swabians was held by the Hohenstaufen dynasty, and when that ended in 1268 Swabia remained acephalous, shared among many lesser lords. Efforts by both the Württemberg dynasty and the Habsburg dynasty to assemble, by purchase and marriage, enough minor lordships to restore the dukedom of Swabia failed, not least since neither of the two would give way to (or wed) the other. In the end, the emperor Maximilian did give the longed-for ducal dignity to the Württemberg dynasty in 1495—but by creating a new 'dukedom of Württemberg' while retaining the essentially empty title 'duke of Swabia' for himself along with all territory that his ancestors had 'collected' within the confines of the old ethnically based duchy. It is significant that much as both contenders took the concept of 'Swabia' very seriously, essentially because of the immense prestige attaching to the eponymous ducal dignity, in order to get it they felt compelled to collect what were essentially bits of territory rather than gain the backing of a people.

In each of those instances, the 'feudal', and territorial, element outweighs the ethnic aspect. A part of Germany is still known as 'Swabia', probably because the dukedom of Swabia—or rather, of the 'Swabians', though as noted the word in German is the same—survived long enough to impress itself in the collective consciousness, and therefore 'Swabia' had to be somewhere (perhaps not fortuitously the Hohenstaufen dynasty, which last held that dukedom, originated in the relatively small area now known as 'Swabia'). Elsewhere, the territory of the old *gentes* shrank with the sphere of influence of the rulers holding their ducal dignity (genuine or pretended), and came to be identified with that sphere of influence even if (as in the case of the Saxons and Franks) it was not only a mere fraction of the former territory going under that name but did not even cover its core area. If this fraction could now take on the name of the former whole, it was because control over territory now counted more than ethnicity. With the *gentes* no longer foci of political power (though they retained some importance as foci of collective identity), their territory was free to fragment politically.

The magnates of the realm now were the 'lords of the land', a term likewise indicating increased importance of territory over ethnic affiliation. In the vernacular, it occurs already in the late eleventh-century *Annolied* (*lantheirrin*, stanza 39); thirteenth-century royal charters refer to the *domini terrae*.[83] Much is usually made of how their rise undermined the power of the crown. It may have done (I would not overestimate the

[83]e.g. the *Statutum in favorem principum* of the emperor Frederic II of 1231 (MGH Const. 2 no. 171) or a decree by his son, king Henry, of the same year (ibid., no. 305).

power of the crown to begin with, nor underestimate the power it always retained), but at the same time they very much needed the crown as the source of their legitimacy. Of course, they did not consciously engineer the trend towards the sacralization of kingship discussed in this section, but they certainly benefited from it and therefore, probably quite instinctively, became mainstays of the new system. This was to be the case until the end of the *ancien régime*. The strength of the German princes is often pointed out (and exaggerated) and contrasted with the 'weakness' of the empire. Curiously, no one seems to think it strange that the many German princes succeeding each other over countless generations never attempted to do away with the empire, which did materially restrict their freedom of action, and go independent—even the most powerful, like the rulers of eighteenth-century Prussia, failed to make any efforts in that direction. There was a symbiotic relationship here, to which we shall return; the point in this section was to explain how the new system represented enough of a shift to consign the German *gentes* to political insignificance within a century while benefiting a new type of political actors. It is also worth underlining that this structural change seems to be essentially due to a cultural phenomenon rather than military or economic factors.

No longer defined by the ability of kings to defend them, but by the mere existence of a crown conceived much more hieratically than before, in the sense that kingship as such now counted more than the person of the incumbent, kingdoms after the turn of the millennium became less fluid geographically than they had been earlier. Armed conflict continued. But it took place within kingdoms as much as between them, and involved individual lords (who might or might not be the kings themselves), not kingdoms as institutional entities, or peoples (even as nationalist feeling might occasionally run high). Kings were kings because of their legitimate accession, expressed by their unction and coronation, not because they were militarily successful. Even William 'the Conqueror' of England, in a way one of the last 'warrior kings' typical of the first millennium, actually had a dynastic claim to the English throne, whereas his defeated opponent Harold did not.

4.2.3 Kingship as a structural factor in the politics of *ancien régime* Europe: the case of Plantagenet expansionism

The observation that, after the turn of the millennium, kingdoms became less fluid, indeed virtually indestructible if they possessed an established, recognized crown—no matter if that crown was actually weak—runs counter to established 'Realist'-style wisdom, which posits that 'states', certainly in that period, survived because of their ability to defend themselves.[84] But it is borne out if we look, for example, at the British 'Celtic fringe': lacking a crown, Ireland and Wales were easily satellized by the Plantagenet dynasty of England, whereas Scotland escaped this fate. Nor was the English crown, in the 'Hundred Years War', able to absorb the French crown.

4.2.3.1 *Ireland and Wales I: the absence of unitary native kingship leads to absorption by the English crown*

If Ireland, in the twelfth century, became nominally subject to the English crown without even having to be conquered, it was ultimately because there was no Irish

[84] e.g. Tilly (1990: 63).

kingship comparable to that of other European kingdoms. Like a microcosm of Latin christendom at large, Ireland was notionally organized as a social hierarchy encompassing the entire island and whose politically important figures, at every level, bore the title *rí* (*rig*[*h*] in more ancient spelling, plural *ríthe*). An Indo-European cognate of Latin *rex*, the word is ordinarily if misleadingly translated as 'king'. 'Leader' would perhaps be more appropriate (certainly, Latin *rex* is related to the verb *rego* 'to lead'), or simply 'lord'. *ríthe* were elected from among the family of their predecessor, usually while that predecessor was still alive. On the local level, there would be a *rí túaithe*, the leader of a *túath* (plural *túatha*). A cognate of Germanic *theod* 'people', this word designated a (perhaps somewhat nominal) community of descent, a clan; the number of *túatha* has been estimated at around 150 in Ireland as a whole. At the next higher level, a *ruiri* was presumably a *rí* to whom other local *ríthe* owed allegiance. The term *rí ruirech* would appear to mark someone ranking at the level above that of *ruiri*. At the top of the hierarchy there was the *ard rí*, a term habitually translated as 'high king'. After the turn of the second millennium, this title designated a primacy of honour among the great *ríthe* attributed to one of them by his peers. It seems to be a relatively late development, even if the sources trace it back to a mythic past; nor was this position always filled. Generally, superordination in the Irish hierarchy did not entail any formal power of command.[85]

In 1155, pope Hadrian IV, himself an Englishman, granted the English king permission to land in Ireland (*ut . . . insulam illam ingrediaris*) in order to reform the morals of the Irish (*pro corrigendis moribus*) and on condition that the king would levy in Ireland an annual tribute to the Holy See.[86] The text, known as the bull *Laudabiliter*, states that the English king had requested it, but it is not clear whether the initiative really came from the English crown or whether, for example, church circles were behind it. The reference to Irish morals may not have been entirely hypocritical, since, among other liberties with church doctrine and to the chagrin of the clergy, divorce for example was at that time common in Irish society. For his part, the English king, Henry II Plantagenet, was evidently in no hurry to invade Ireland since, following *Laudabiliter*, he did nothing of the sort, not even when, in 1167, the *rí* of Leinster, Diarmait Mac Murchadha (Dermot MacMurrough), called on him for support in a quarrel that opposed him to the then *ard rí*. Diarmait politely did homage to Henry, but rather than intervene himself the king merely authorized Diarmait to recruit Anglo-Norman barons from the unruly Welsh marches for his cause.

However, those barons were so successful militarily that in 1171 the king at last did land in Ireland to receive the homage of the Irish magnates, including the *ard rí*, a title that was henceforth redundant.[87] It seems that, just as much as Henry himself, the Irish feared that otherwise the immigrant barons would grow too powerful. Under feudal law, their allegiance to the English king made him the protector of the Irish and thus made it more difficult for the barons, out to win land for themselves, to attack them. The Irish may also have regarded their acknowledgement of the English king as a natural prolongation of their own hierarchy, since, after all, they considered themselves part of

[85]Cf. Duffy (1997: 16ff.); Ó Corráin (1972: 28–42); LdM 'Hochkönig', 'cóiced'. The spelling of ancient Irish vocabulary and proper names varies from one present-day author to the next.

[86]Text of the bull, e.g. in Curtis and McDowell (1943: 17–18) (English); Scott and Martin (1978: 144–6) (Latin and English); Sheehy (1962: 15–16) (Latin).

[87]On the homage of the *ard rí* (the date and circumstances of which are controversial) Lydon (1988: 54).

the larger christian community, too: 'The Irish had always recognized the Roman emperor [i.e. the German ruler] as "king of the world."'[88] So did Henry, who, in 1157, had done homage to his 'most cherished friend [*precordialis amicus*]' the emperor, at a time when, king of England as well as lord of much of France, he himself was probably the most powerful secular ruler in Latin christendom:

> We put our kingdom . . . at your disposal, so that everything may be done in accordance with your wishes and in conformity with your imperial will. Let there be indivisible unity of peace and love between us and our peoples . . . albeit in such a way that you, being of higher rank, have final authority, while we shall not be found wanting in obedience.[89]

This had no practical effect whatever, and no doubt was not expected to. The Irish may likewise have felt that their homage to Henry would at best provide some protection from the barons, and at worst remain an empty gesture.

No compulsion against the Irish was exercised by the English king during his stay on the island. He had the support of the Irish episcopate, who may have hoped to gain, with his help, a stronger position for the clergy in Irish society, similar to that of the clergy in England. Pope Alexander III confirmed Henry as secular master of Ireland in letters to the king as well as to the secular and ecclesiastical magnates of Ireland, expressly describing the submission of the Irish as voluntary.[90] Pope Hadrian in *Laudabiliter* had referred to Ireland as an island, as a country (*terra*), and as a nation (*gens*), but not as a kingdom (*regnum*). Accordingly, Henry took the title 'lord of Ireland' (*dominus Hiberniae*), not 'king of Ireland'. It was only in 1542 that Henry VIII adopted that latter title.

Like Ireland, Wales, after the end of Roman rule in the early fifth century, had always been divided into plural principalities. In Welsh sources, their leaders are sometimes called *brenin*, which in present-day Welsh is the equivalent of the English word 'king', as well as *rhi* (the etymological counterpart of *rí* in Irish). After the turn of the millennium, Welsh sources prefer *tywysog*, equated with Latin *princeps* 'prince', and *arglwydd*, equated with Latin *dominus* 'lord', whereas English sources written in Latin actually tend to employ *rex*.[91] As in Ireland, we have the phenomenon of voluntary submission of one of the Welsh magnates to the English crown as a result of a power struggle within Wales: in 1267, the prince of Gwynedd, Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, recognized the suzerainty of the English king, Henry III Plantagenet, in return for support against Llywelyn's two brothers, and in order for Llywelyn to gain the overlordship of the whole of Wales. Henry III in his turn recognized Llywelyn as *princeps Wallie*, 'prince of Wales', a title originally adopted in a treaty between Llywelyn and Simon de Montfort, the leader of the English rebels against Henry in the so-called Barons' War, and later approved by Henry. If homage done to the English crown by Welsh magnates was nothing new in itself, the adoption of a title implying rulership of one of those magnates over Wales in its entirety was. Subsequently, however, Llywelyn refused to pay homage to the new English king, Edward I, despite

[88] Martin (1987: 88–9).

[89] *Regnum nostrum . . . vestre committimus potestati, ut ad vestrum nutum omnia disponantur et in omnibus vestri fiat voluntas imperii. Sit igitur inter nos et populos nostros dilectionis et pacis unitas indivisa . . . ita tamen, ut vobis, qui dignitate preminetis, imperandi cedat auctoritas, nobis non deerit voluntas obsequendi.* Rahewin, *Gesta Friderici* 3.7 (MGH SSrG 46).

[90] Sheehy (1962: nos. 5–7); English trans. in Curtis and McDowell 19–22.

[91] On this nomenclature see Charles-Edwards, Owen, and Russell (2000: 195, 214–15, 400); Smith (1998: 282–4); Turvey (2002: 15–18).

being called on to do so several times. Edward thereupon marched against Llywelyn and defeated him.

Llywelyn kept the title *princeps Wallie*, but his authority was once more largely limited to his native Gwynedd. Moreover, he was left in a very uncomfortable position, suspect both to the English and to the Welsh and with little leverage over either. When a (minor) Welsh uprising broke out, Llywelyn had no option but to join it, the more so as the rebellion was led by one of his brothers—if standing back might have been safer, it would also have meant sacrificing all credibility with the Welsh. Llywelyn was killed somewhat accidentally in a skirmish in 1282. It was only thereafter that the Welsh-speaking territory was largely occupied by English troops, partly converted into shires placed under royal administration (but often entrusted to indigenous nobles), and secured with a number of strong castles.

4.2.3.2 *Scotland I: a unitary, but non-standard native kingship*

We shall return to Ireland and Wales but must first turn to Scotland. Whereas, in the first millennium, Ireland and Wales were ethnically quite homogeneous, this was not true of northern Britain. The inhabitants of the north and west of what was to become Scotland, known as *Scot(t)i*, were Irish by language and culture. Much of the east was populated by the Picts. The area around Glasgow (Strathclyde) belonged to Britons speaking the language that in English is now called Welsh, and the south and the area around Edinburgh (Lothian) in the latter part of the first millennium were settled by Angles. This ethnic diversity may at least partly account for the fact that conflict between those groups of inhabitants seems to have been fiercer than conflict among the inhabitants of Ireland and Wales. At any rate, it resulted in the unification of Scotland by the rulers of the Irish realm of Dál Riata straddling Northern Ireland (Antrim) and western Scotland (Argyll) and inhabited by the *Scot(t)i*. With what appears to have been considerable brutality, Cináed Mac Alpín (Kenneth MacAlpin, reigns 841–58) of Dál Riata destroyed the Pictish principalities already weakened by Viking raids.

Later chroniclers regard him as the first incumbent of what was to become the Scottish throne, even though it was not before the early eleventh century that both the Britons of Strathclyde and the Angles of Lothian had finally been brought under 'Scottish' rule: all rival centres of power having been eliminated, the appellation *Scot(t)i* came to be applied to all the subjects of Cináed's successors. Based on conquest, this Scottish kingship was evidently stronger, in organizational terms, than those whom it subjugated, but it was weaker than Norman kingship, likewise based on conquest. After his occupation of England from 1066 onwards, William of Normandy advanced with his army and navy to the Firth of Tay, but omitted to conquer Scotland. Moreover, the Scottish king Malcolm III (reigns 1058–93) did homage to William. Thereafter, relations between the two kingdoms remained largely friendly, while culturally as well as politically Scotland was exposed to strong Anglo-Norman influence.

Although, from today's perspective, the 'feudal' system seems to be characterized by decentralization of power, it was nevertheless more centralized, and focused on the king, than the Irish system, where the lower *ríthe* were not in any formal way linked, let alone answerable, to those of higher rank. Until the twelfth century, the Scottish system, with its Irish cultural heritage, seems to have been quite similar to that Irish system in that the leading nobles were not in any formal way obligated to the king. To reduce the

influence of the native magnates, king David I (reigns 1124–53) enfeoffed Anglo-Norman barons like the (de) Bruce (who took their name from the town of Brix in Normandy) and the (de) Balliol (who called themselves after the town of Bailleul-en-Vimeu in Picardy) with estates, court offices, and the new Scottish bishoprics and abbeys that he founded—that latter measure designed to reduce the influence of the native Celtic church, which like the native magnates had no formal ties with the king. However, at least some of the native nobles adapted, and likewise became royal vassals. We have the same phenomenon here as in contemporary Germany, with the allegiance of some subcommunity within the realm being replaced by allegiance to the king as the main ingredient of the legitimacy of the magnates. David also founded towns, with settlers in part recruited in the Low Countries and Germany, which became an important source of revenue for the Scottish monarchy.

David in this fashion did much to turn Scotland into a 'normal' kingdom similar to those found elsewhere in christendom at that time. Yet it remained archaic in one important respect. Like Irish *ríthe*, and due evidently to the Irish cultural legacy of the realm of Dál Riata, the Scottish king was not crowned or anointed at his inauguration. Until purged by David, this seems originally to have involved much ancient 'pagan' ritual, like the sacrifice of a horse. Typically Irish elements of the enkinging that were retained even by David included reciting the genealogy of the king at great length (it went back to Scota, daughter of Pharao) and in the Irish language—Latin, the 'holy' language of the church and of 'modern' administration, was probably not used in the ceremony. The new king was invested with a staff and perhaps a robe, and the ceremony somehow (the details are now lost) involved a sacred stone, a plain, roughly hewn slab on which the king may have stepped or sat. This sacred stone is often referred to as the Scottish 'coronation stone', a misnomer since the enkinging involved no coronation. Scone having been an important religious centre of the Picts, it was there that the ceremony was held—at least this was certainly the case after the foundation of Scone abbey in 1115. However, the event did not take place in the abbey *church* but next to it, in the open air—certainly this was so at the inauguration of Alexander III in 1249, which is the first such occasion about which we know even this much.

In a basic sense, this is the type of enkinging preferred over the more 'modern' coronation and unction by Henry I in 919. But Henry had the choice: the more 'modern' mode was offered to him, and his successors, beginning with his son Otto in 937, all availed themselves of it—to the point that after the turn of the millennium nothing else was even conceivable any longer. The Scots, for their part, by the thirteenth century would dearly have liked their king to be properly crowned and anointed. The catch was that this required a bishop, and he needed papal authorization. It was repeatedly petitioned for by the Scots, but Rome always turned them down, in response to English objections based on a claim that the Scottish rulers were vassals of the English crown.[92]

In 1286, the royal house unexpectedly became extinct. The regents arranged for the future marriage of the heiress to the Scottish throne, 3-year-old Margaret of Norway, with the English crown prince (himself only aged 2 at that time), while the English king, Edward I, agreed that Scotland and England would never be merged even if they came to share the same king (treaty of Birgham). But Margaret died during her crossing to

[92] On the ceremonial aspects of Scottish kingship, see Duncan (1975: 115–16, 552–8); on Irish parallels, Ó Corráin (1972: 33–7).

Scotland. This left no fewer than thirteen claimants to the Scottish throne, all more or less distantly related to the defunct dynasty. The Scots sought the arbitration of Edward I, who agreed to examine the respective merits of the claimants but insisted that the Scots had to acknowledge his suzerainty over the Scottish kingdom; this was reluctantly agreed to. After all, the previous king Alexander III had also done homage to the English king, although the Scots liked to think that this was only for his possessions in England (I do not know what, in Alexander's case, those possessions were, but David I held three English counties from king Henry I, his brother-in-law). In what seems to have been a scrupulously legal procedure, Edward decided that of the thirteen candidates John Balliol had the best dynastic claim. John duly became king and did homage to Edward. If this homage had been treated as essentially symbolical like that of the Irish magnates to Henry II or that king's homage to the emperor, history would have taken a different course. But Edward, a powerful and energetic ruler, was not content with the token overlordship common on every level of the feudal hierarchy. He encouraged the Scots to appeal to him, the supreme liege lord, against their king, and imposed humiliating sanctions when John objected. On a strict interpretation of feudal law, Edward was within his rights, but politically his behaviour was a disaster for John.

In his desire to strengthen his kingship by making the most of his formal prerogatives, Edward was much like his contemporary king Philip IV of France, whom we encountered in Chapter 3. Philip in fact made the same sort of demands of Edward in his capacity as Edward's liege for the continental possessions of the English king as Edward was making of John. When Edward failed to comply, Philip in 1294 stripped him of the duchy of Aquitaine. Edward refused to give it up, which meant war with Philip. As any liege faced with a feud would have done, the English king called on his vassals to serve him in this war with their men, including king John. For John it was the last straw: he could not ask the Scots to follow him into a war in a foreign land on behalf of the English king and retain any hope of acceptance of his own kingship by them. Instead, in a desperate bid to save his throne, he entered into an alliance with Philip against Edward. Edward thus had a perfectly legitimate cause for war on John as well as Philip. Well-organized militarily as he was, he forced John into submission in a matter of weeks, formally stripping him of his kingship and putting him under arrest. The Scots were disorganized and disunited. Support for John was lukewarm, and some Scots indeed supported Edward even on the battlefield—among them the two Robert Bruce, father and son, whose claim to the Scottish throne was considered the best after that of John Balliol and who must have hoped that, John having failed, Edward would now give the Scottish throne to them.

But he did not. Edward may have felt that such a move could only lead to the same unsatisfactory situation as before, where he could not make any demands in his capacity as liege of the Scottish king without undermining the position of that king in Scotland itself. He could, then, either allow his suzerainty over Scotland to become a mere empty claim, or take the country over himself. Given his personality, and the situation (he had just, more or less, conquered the country), it is not surprising that he chose the latter. On the other hand, if the Bruce family expected that Edward would name another native Scottish king, it was because anyone could see that the attempt by Edward to impose his authority in Scotland directly was ambitious to the point of temerity. After all, he was a foreigner whose sole claim to the Scottish throne was a suzerainty that the Scots themselves had always tended to contest, and only half-accepted as long as it remained

largely meaningless in practice. Edward must of course have been aware of this problem, and this may explain why, having chosen the option that for him was the only acceptable one, he made no attempt to placate the Scots. Instead, he seems to have decided quite consciously that ruthlessness was the only viable strategy. This included dismantling Scotland as a kingdom.

As liege, he would have been entitled to keep the Scottish throne, which had escheated to him, for himself, simply adding the Scottish kingship to the English kingship that was his already but without merging the two (had the treaty of Birgham, voluntarily agreed to by the Scots, been implemented, this would have happened in the next generation in any case). But the Scottish kingship, defined, like any other European kingship, by a specific tradition and set of customary rights, was weaker than the English kingship, and so this solution would have demanded of Edward, the powerful ruler of England, not to employ the resources at his disposal in that country to impose a claim to the kingship of Scotland so controversial that those resources were actually badly needed. This would have been schizophrenic; small wonder that Edward, though by no means unscrupulous with regard to legal questions, in this situation chose resources over legitimacy and attempted to hold Scotland by force. Besides, I suspect that for Edward the idea of going to Scone and subjecting himself to a ritual whose christian credentials were at best dubious, and performed in a language he did not understand, was too abstruse to be entertained. What he did instead was take the sacred stone from Scone Abbey to Westminster Abbey, where he had it incorporated in a specially made throne. This so-called Coronation Chair is still kept at Westminster Abbey and has been used for the coronation of subsequent English/British monarchs down to Elizabeth II in 1953 (in 1996, however, the septcentenary of its being brought to England, the stone was returned to Scotland).

The case of Scotland is similar to that of Wales in that there, too, following the failure of the attempt to exercise power indirectly in his capacity as liege, Edward assumed direct control and secured it militarily, this being the only alternative to becoming prince of Wales himself. The latter option was not really acceptable since as with Scottish kingship, though for a different reason, the position was not suitable for Edward. Whereas Scottish kingship was sanctioned by tradition but of inferior status, the title 'prince of Wales' had only been created for Llywelyn, and had never had real backing among the Welsh at large. The takeover of Wales by the English crown worked because however much the English might be disliked the Welsh had never been united. By the time they came under direct English rule, it was too late to create a common polity to serve as a framework for successful resistance. By contrast, the English failed in Scotland even though the full weight of English military might was brought to bear on Scotland in a way that Wales, let alone pre-Reformation Ireland, never experienced. There were many contingent factors, even chance events, that contributed to the successful assertion of Scottish independence. But the crucial difference went far back in time and ultimately lay in the unification of Scotland by Cináed Mac Alpín and his successors, and the efforts, in particular of David I, to bring Scottish kingship in line with the prevailing political culture of the age. By the turn of the fourteenth century, it was too far advanced on the road to consolidation for Scotland to go the way of Ireland and Wales and become annexed to the English crown. Even such as it was, Scottish kingship provided too clear a focal point for what had, unlike Ireland and Wales, become a unified polity in its own right, to be swallowed up even by so powerful a kingdom as England was at that time.

4.2.3.3 *Scotland II: a unitary native kingship reasserted and standardized*

This manifested itself early on in the immediacy, scale, and degree of organization of the Scottish rebellion. In pre-Reformation Ireland, there was no large-scale contestation of English suzerainty at all. In Wales, resistance was sporadic and mostly low-key until the great revolt of Owain Glyn Dŵr in the early fifteenth century. Ten years passed between the reorganization of the country by Edward in 1284 and the brief Welsh revolt of 1294/5. By contrast, the Scots rose against Edward the moment he left the country again, and inflicted a resounding defeat on the English in the battle of Stirling Bridge (1297). To be sure, this was no doubt due partly to the English crown being taken by surprise at the quickness and magnitude of this reaction, and the initial Scottish triumph was followed by a long series of military disasters. Yet despite their defeat at Falkirk (1298) the Scots went on to form a regency council.

The Scottish resistance was not powered by nationalism in an ethno-cultural sense. At its forefront were leading families of Anglo-Norman origin who held estates and fiefs in England as well as Scotland. They were culturally indistinguishable from the political elite of the English kingdom, or indeed from the very barons who had also partly colonized Wales and Ireland. Thus, the Balliol family had vast estates in northern England and had founded a college at Oxford. The Bruce family likewise had important English estates; Robert Bruce junior, subsequently king of Scots and hero of the resistance, was married (in his second marriage) to the daughter of a powerful figure at the English court and holder of an Irish fief, Richard de Burgh, earl of Ulster. But the Scottish nobles had become attached to their own court and king and the prestige and preferment emanating therefrom. They were not going to have that taken away from them without a fight, especially as the positions of influence at the English court were already occupied by the English nobility.

Obstreperous and independent-minded as they tended to be, the Anglo-Norman barons in Wales and Ireland nevertheless were supporters of the English crown at least in the sense that they were not going to repudiate it. The English crown was *their* crown, and with their help a degree of English control or at least influence could be maintained in parts of Ireland and Wales (even if in the pre-Reformation period it always remained tenuous). What made Scotland different was that there the same group had an alternative kingship to adhere to, which they did. The character of Edward I, aloof, severe, ungenerous, must have helped to push them in that direction, but this was a contributing factor in a development for which the existence of an established Scottish kingship was a necessary condition.

Scottish kingship was imperfect in that incumbents had hitherto not been crowned and anointed, but that deficiency was remedied in due course. Here, the attitude of the pope was crucial. The declaration of Arbroath was addressed to the pope; but Scottish lobbying at the curia was intense already in the preceding decades, and quite successful. Following the Scottish revolt of 1297, pope Boniface VIII sent Edward a stern missive in which he claimed that the kingdom of Scotland was a papal fief, not an English fief, and demanded of the English king to justify his behaviour regarding Scotland by a set date (papal bull *Scimus fili*, 1299). In fact, unlike the kingdom of Sicily, or Ireland (where this was derived from the fake Donation of Constantine), Scotland most certainly was not under papal suzerainty. This papal claim may have been a calculated gamble, or an

honest mistake perhaps based on the papal bull *Cum universi* of 1189 or thereabouts, in which, at the request of the Scottish clergy, the Scottish church had been exempted from the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the English archbishop of York and placed directly under papal jurisdiction.[93]

Papal pressure seems to have been responsible for the liberation of John Balliol. He withdrew to the old Balliol family seat in Picardy but seemed poised to be reinstated as Scottish king. This prompted the Scottish rebels to date their official utterances by the years of his reign from 1301 onwards, and Robert Bruce junior to leave their ranks and defect to the English again. When, despite Robert Bruce the elder and his son of the same name having fought for Edward against John Balliol, the Bruce family nevertheless did not receive the Scottish kingship, Robert Bruce junior joined the Scottish insurgency and indeed became a member of the regency council. Switching sides again, in 1302 he made his peace with Edward, a move no doubt dictated by several motives. Robert had no gratitude to expect from John Balliol; he may have hoped that Edward would now back his candidacy for the Scottish throne after all, as an alternative to the humiliating Balliol restoration; and his father Robert Bruce senior might not live much longer (indeed he died in 1304): as one of the Scottish rebels, Robert junior would not have been able to succeed to the family estates in England.

The difficulty with which his Scottish policy had met may have contributed to Edward's decision in 1301 to create a new Prince of Wales: his son, the future Edward II. Indeed that young prince soon achieved considerable popularity in Wales, another indication that ethno-cultural nationalism was not the chief root of Welsh political discontent. In the face of domestic English opposition to the exactions imposed by the crown to finance its military efforts, and of the Scottish rebellion, Edward abandoned the French war in 1297. He concluded a truce with king Philip but continued to fund adversaries of his French opponent in the Low Countries and the Rhineland. This strategy scored a major success when, in 1302, Philip suffered a disastrous defeat at Kortrijk at the hands of the Flemings (encouraged by Edward). Unfortunately for the Scots, this forced Philip to convert his truce with Edward into a full-scale peace and restore Aquitaine. Already in 1299, Edward had married Philip's sister; now the Anglo-French reconciliation was cemented by the engagement of the English crown prince—the new Prince of Wales, the product of an earlier marriage by Edward—with Philip's daughter Isabella.

Also in 1302, pope Boniface issued his bull *Unam sanctam*, which destroyed what little goodwill was left in the already strained relationship between the French court and the curia. With the French king now working to have the pope deposed, Boniface naturally grew more sympathetic to Philip's rival Edward, and accused the Scottish episcopate (quite correctly) of fomenting the Scottish insurgency. In this situation the pope became inclined to accept Edward's reply to *Scimus fili*, to the effect that when Edward's forbears the Trojans (led by Aeneas' son Brutus) had conquered Britain (named, of course, after Brutus), they had also subjected the Scots—even if the Scots countered immediately with a story similar to that later included in the declaration of Arbroath, that they, invaders themselves, had come to Scotland via Egypt and Spain and had never been subject to anyone.[94]

[93] Cf. Barrell (2000: 47–8).
[94] Cf. Nicholson (1974: 60–2); Barrell (2000: 110–11).

Following another successful campaign, Edward imposed a peace on Scotland in 1304 that most of the Scottish magnates accepted. Meanwhile, Robert Bruce junior was once again disappointed with Edward's failure to reward his (new-found) loyalty to the English crown, indeed to treat him with any regard. Of course Robert had proved fickle; the English king may have felt that pardoning Robert was already more than he deserved, to say nothing of giving the man a throne to sit on. Anyway, with king Philip and pope Boniface no longer pushing for the restoration of John Balliol this had ceased to be a pressing concern. But Robert *was* a major Scottish player with a good dynastic claim to the Scottish kingship, and in retrospect it is clear that the English king made a mistake in not trying at least to string him along.

There was a third great Anglo-Norman family in Scotland with a claim to the throne, the Comyn family. To get anywhere in Scotland, Robert needed their support, or at least their neutrality. But he trusted them so little (or they him, or both) that when they arranged to meet it was in the assumed safety of a sanctuary, the greyfriars' church at Dumfries (1306). To no avail: the exact circumstances are unclear, but at the end of the meeting the senior Comyn was dead and Robert a fugitive guilty of so major a sin—killing someone in a church—that it made him automatically excommunicate. To be sure, the bishop of Glasgow helpfully granted him absolution straightaway, but the curia would not hear of it. Reckoning no doubt that in the face of this disaster nothing could conceivably make things worse, Robert hastily had himself inaugurated king of Scots at Scone by a handful of loyal adherents, in a makeshift ceremony and with an ersatz sacred stone. His sole chance of turning the situation around and saving himself from total ignominy was to get accepted as Scottish king. The odds were long: he was up against king Edward, the Comyn family and their following, those in Scotland who thought that their rightful king was John Balliol, and the pope. But, his ambition fuelled further by the absence of any alternative, Robert succeeded. Hunted by Edward, who imprisoned his wife, daughter, and other female relatives and had three of his brothers executed, he made himself the soul of the resistance, outshining the passive John Balliol. John died at Bailleul in 1313; already in 1309, at a parliament at Saint Andrews, the Scots had transferred their allegiance to Robert.

Luck was on his side in that the English king did not have much time left to deal with him. In 1307, Edward was succeeded by the incapable Edward II, who alienated the English nobility by heaping extravagant favours on his equally incapable lover Piers Gaveston. Although Edward II remained committed to crushing the Scottish resistance, he lacked his father's single-minded resolve; moreover, the walking domestic crisis that he represented distracted from the war effort. In 1314 at Bannockburn, Robert inflicted a crushing defeat on the English army. In 1316, the pope readmitted him to the church, only to excommunicate him again in 1318 in the context of a quarrel over the nomination of Scottish bishops. It was in this context that the declaration of Arbroath was dispatched in 1320; in 1324, the pope recognized Robert as king. Caught up in domestic turmoil, Edward II meanwhile pursued the Scottish war only languidly.

In 1327 he was deposed by his French wife, Isabella, who assumed the regency for her son Edward III. A new campaign against the Scots having failed, the cash-strapped queen made peace with Robert in return for a payment of 20,000 pounds. The peace involved the marriage of her daughter with the Scottish crown prince, David Bruce. In a document negotiated at Edinburgh in 1327 and ratified at Northampton in 1328, Edward III relinquished any claim to suzerainty over Scotland. Robert now dispatched another

petition to the Holy See asking for permission to be crowned and anointed. This time it was granted: Robert having died in 1329, his little son David II in 1331 became the first king of Scots to be *christus Domini*, as, likewise, were his successors. Although Isabella had agreed to return the stone of Scone, it was not delivered to her by its keeper, and she travelled north to the marriage of her daughter at Berwick on the English–Scottish border without it.[95] It seems that the Scots did not make a fuss, either then or thereafter: the reason for that may well be that the stone had become dispensable.

Thanks to the acquisition of a proper crown the kingdom of Scotland was now indestructible, even though its relations with its southern neighbour remained turbulent and the power of the Scottish crown, negligible. Indeed, in the fourteenth century the country basically sank into anarchy. Edward III of England seized power from his mother in 1330 and repudiated the 'quitclaim' of 1328 that freed the Scottish king from any obligation to the English crown—on the grounds that although it was issued in his name he had had no part in it. The new English king supported the claim of Edward Balliol, son of John, to the Scottish throne. In return for English military backing, Edward Balliol recognized English suzerainty, landed in Scotland, and had himself inaugurated at Scone (I have been unable to find any reliable information about whether this involved a coronation). While Scotland once again came under English occupation, young king David was sent to the safety of France, only to be captured by the English at his very first military venture against them. A nominal prisoner at the English court, he felt so at home there that he returned repeatedly even when, eleven years later, he was released for a huge ransom raised by the Scots; moreover, it was with difficulty that, on at least two occasions, the Scots prevented him from appointing the English king (his brother-in-law) as his heir if he died childless, which he did.

The Scots meanwhile got rid of Edward Balliol, who despite military victories by his English troops was unable to establish any real control over the country. With king David in exile, the realm was administered by his nephew, who also succeeded him at his death in 1371; his original position as steward of Scotland gave the new dynasty its name (albeit usually in the spelling Stuart). Hampered by power struggles within the dynasty, long periods of regency (in the fifteenth century, king after king died young, leaving under-age heirs), powerful magnates, and intermittent warfare against the English (with, at best, inconclusive results), Scottish kingship after the reassertion of independence in the early fourteenth century never gained much strength. But, significantly, it was never again contested by the English crown. Its independence was not the result of its 'deterrent' capability (except perhaps in the sense that the English had learned the lesson that it was unwise to stir up this hornets' nest). Rather, by the late pre-Reformation period destruction of an established kingdom had become simply unthinkable.

In the *ancien régime*, a kingdom might—occasionally, and typically to a quite limited extent—expand through conquest. But the only way to join another kingdom, as such, to one's own was to marry or inherit it. Merger by conquest was simply out of the question—unless you went to war in pursuit of a title based on heredity. Not infrequently, more than one claimant might have such a title, and it might be genuinely impossible to determine which of them had the best. In such a situation, war was an accepted way of settling the question. The attempt by Edward Balliol to displace David II is a case

[95]Statement by the Secretary of State for Scotland, Lord James Douglas-Hamilton, in the House of Commons on 16 July 1996, Hansard col. 1055.

in point: his dynastic right to the Scottish throne was as good as David's. Scotland and England eventually *were* joined, in the manner typical of the *ancien régime*, and entirely peacefully: the Stuart dynasty inherited the English throne when the Tudor dynasty became extinct in 1603.

4.2.3.4 *Ireland and Wales II: absent a native crown, English overlordship proves impossible to remove*

If the Bruce family successfully claimed and consolidated the Scottish kingship (because it was there to claim in the first place), they failed in Ireland, where they tried, too. After the usurpation of 1306, Edward I of England had all the Bruce brothers killed but two—Robert himself and Edward. When Robert was recognized as Scottish king at the parliament of Saint Andrews in 1309, he had no son, which made Edward his heir-presumptive. But once Robert was reunited with his wife in 1315, as a result of a prisoner exchange following his victory at Bannockburn, it was reasonable to expect that he would in due course produce a direct heir. A plan was conceived to find Edward, who seems to have been a difficult and unruly character, a kingdom of his own in Ireland. For Robert, this had the double advantage of getting Edward out of his hair while opening a new front for the English in Ireland, diminishing the resources that they could direct against Scotland. In 1315, Edward thus landed in Ireland and had himself inaugurated as king of Ireland at Dundalk. However, his reception in Ireland was far from enthusiastic, not just among the Anglo-Irish, but also among the 'Irish' Irish. The Scottish attempt to take Dublin by surprise having failed, in 1316 Robert Bruce himself landed in Ireland to aid Edward militarily, but withdrew without achieving any breakthrough; thereafter military operations continued inconclusively until Edward was killed in battle in 1318. Already in the previous year, an Irish relative of the Bruce brothers, Domnall Uí Néill (Donald O'Neill), had sent the pope an address in support of the Bruce claim to the 'Irish' throne, a document that is commonly if misleadingly referred to as the 'Remonstrance of the Irish princes'.[96]

It has been compared with the declaration of Arbroath and even, incongruously, attributed to the same unknown drafter. In fact, it conspicuously lacks the rhetorical and psychological skill apparent in the Arbroath document. The 1317 remonstrance is much longer, indeed excessively so, much of it taken up by an endless and, in part, intrinsically implausible rant against the misdeeds of the 'English' (including the Anglo-Irish) in Ireland. The remonstrance recognizes the English claim to Ireland based on *Laudabiliter*, but argues that because the English had failed to improve Irish morals (or levy the tax for the Holy See provided for in the bull) they had forfeited that claim. At the end of the document the pope is informed, rather summarily, that because the English had not carried out the mandate given to them in *Laudabiliter*, and moreover were impossible to live with, the Irish had chosen Edward Bruce to be their king instead of the English king. Thus, having recognized papal suzerainty over Ireland the document goes on to ignore it, without any apparent awareness of the contradiction. By contrast, the declaration of Arbroath cleverly combines pressure on the pope (who is warned that any further bloodshed in the English–Scottish conflict will imperil the salvation of his soul unless he leans on the English king to prevent it) with promises (do what we want

[96] An English trans. of the 'remonstrance' is in Curtis and McDowell (1943: 38–46).

and we shall go on a crusade), and a great rhetorical display of humility and deference. And whereas the remonstrance assails the perfidy of the English at inordinate length and returns to this topic at every opportunity, the declaration, having gravely but with adroit concision alluded to English cruelty, continues in an inclusive and conciliatory register (no difference, for christians, between 'Jews and Greeks, Scots and English'; Scottish readiness 'to do for [the English king] what is in our power').

The main similarity between the remonstrance and the declaration (it is of course possible that, even if they were not composed by the same person, whoever drew up the declaration knew the earlier remonstrance) is the emphasis on the ancientness of the native kingship: the Arbroath document advertises 113 native Scottish kings, the line unbroken by any foreigner; the 1317 remonstrance declares Domnall to be heir to 197 native Irish kings, and to 'the whole of Ireland'. But although the Ui Néill had indeed frequently held the post of *ard rí*, this was no 'Irish kingship' comparable to the Scottish kingship. In the document Domnall actually describes himself as *rex Ultoniae*, '*king* of Ulster', without explaining how the existence of a separate Ulster 'kingship' squared with the 'Irish' kingship that he postulated: it did in the old Irish system outlined above, but this could of course not be invoked in support of the kind of kingship Domnall was trying to obtain for Edward Bruce. Nor does Domnall explain why, if he himself was heir to a long line of native kings, that kingship should now be given to someone else, and a foreigner, too. In a brief throwaway phrase the text does assert Edward to have 'sprung from our noblest ancestors', but even though the Anglo-Norman nobility in Scotland had intermarried with the native nobility, and Edward was related to Domnall, he could hardly be described as Irish. The Bruce family, ironically, was just as Anglo-Norman as the Anglo-Irish barons that the remonstrance complains about—indeed, as mentioned, Robert Bruce was the son-in-law of the Anglo-Irish earl of Ulster. (Domnall was actually *rí* of Tir Eógain/Tyrone, and in the sixteenth century an 'earldom of Tyrone' was created for the Ui Néill.)

The declaration of Arbroath was issued by some forty Scottish magnates that it lists by name and whose seals (or, at any rate, a corresponding number of seals: some of them do not match) were appended. By contrast, the remonstrance, even though it purports to be speaking for the Irish as a whole, only lists Domnall by name. Moreover, the declaration of Arbroath was dispatched *after* a successful Scottish revolt against the English invaders; but the 1317 document announces an Irish revolt that was yet to take place. It never did—even though, if the Irish had wanted to stage a rebellion, this would have been the moment to do it. Their failure to do so, along with many of the oddities of the text, is explained if rather than taking the document at face value the whole undertaking is interpreted as very much a Scottish initiative with minimal Irish input—which of course Domnall could not let on to. Robert Bruce had hoped that after Bannockburn the English king would be ready to negotiate, but when that expectation turned out to be wrong Robert must have been eager to increase the pressure on the English further. In fact they came to believe (possibly encouraged by Robert himself) that he would land in Wales and launch a rising there, so that the English were preparing to fend off an invasion of Wales when what occurred was an invasion of Ireland. As a result, English forces were tied down in Wales *and* Ireland. Stuck in Ireland, Edward in 1316 issued an appeal to the Welsh magnates to make him the leader of a revolt against the English—evidently falling back on plan B; no rising, however, occurred. Nevertheless, northern England, militarily left to its own devices

throughout most of the remainder of Edward II's reign, lay open to devastating Scottish raids.

As Archibald Duncan has ingeniously and convincingly shown, the common assumption that Edward Bruce adopted the Irish kingship only in 1316, over a year after his arrival on the island, is due to a chronicler's error. In fact, the inauguration at Dundalk must have taken place very soon after Edward had disembarked—presenting the Irish with a fait accompli rather than taking place at their invitation. On the contrary, it was an invitation to *them*—but which they largely failed to warm to. Nor, it would appear, was the bulk of the 1317 remonstrance—the jeremiad against English mistreatment of the natives—originally connected with the Bruce mission, to which reference is made only at the end of the document. A pre-existing text seems to have been adapted for the purpose of providing a semblance of legitimacy for Edward.[97]

In Wales, the single great revolt against English domination took place over a century after the integration of the country into the English kingdom. Interestingly, in light of the thesis proposed here that after the turn of the millennium independence of a country rested on the presence of a crown, there seems to be no evidence that the leader of the revolt, Owain Glyn Dŵr (Owen Glendower), ever explicitly sought independence for Wales or a crown for himself. Such a new crown would by this time have been very difficult to create, against the opposition of the English crown and given that English suzerainty had been acknowledged for so long and by so many, including Owain himself.

Owain took advantage of the revolt of leading English nobles against the English king: the incumbent, Henry IV Lancaster (a branch of the Plantagenet dynasty), being of doubtful legitimacy since he owed the throne to the deposition of Richard II in 1399, the rebels wanted to replace him with another member of the dynasty (an ancestor of what would later become known as the York branch of the royal house). Owain was a well-to-do member of the Welsh gentry, linked to the English court by his career and marriage—and thus no obvious victim of any 'colonial' oppression. By the terms of the so-called Tripartite Indenture concluded by the rebels in 1405, Owain was to become prince of a Greater Wales, territorially augmented by several English counties adjoining the principality. A copy of a treaty that Owain concluded with the French king in 1404 and now in the British Public Record Office preserves his magnificent seal. It shows him sitting on a throne, behind which angels hold up his mantle, embroidered with heraldic emblems—the lions of Gwynedd, from whose rulers he claimed to be descended though apparently he was not (he *was* related to the ancient rulers of Powys and Deheubarth). The impression is certainly regal. But although the figure on the throne is holding a sceptre, his head is bare.

The legend reads *owynus dei gracia princeps wallie*, Owain, by god's grace *Prince* of Wales. Kings would routinely date charters as having been issued 'in the so-and-so-manieth year of our reign [*regni nostri*]'; Owain put 'in the so-and-so-manieth year of our being prince [*principatus nostri*]'. The ambiguity of his position and aims was never resolved. In the feudal hierarchy of christendom, a mere 'prince' needed a (royal) liege. Presumably, if Owain had prevailed he would nevertheless have done homage to the English king, especially as it is hard to see how he could have got away with establishing an independent Welsh kingdom that would actually have incorporated a substantial amount of unquestionably English territory. In any case he did not prevail, because

[97]Duncan (1988).

Henry IV defeated his English adversaries and held on to his throne. For some time, Owain's cause was quite popular in Wales, feeding on mutual animosity between the Welsh and the English. But in the end, the rising subsided as abruptly as it had begun; the self-appointed prince simply vanished, and we do not even know when or how he died (probably in 1415 or 1416). Many Welsh magnates no doubt preferred the English crown to a shady Welsh dignity whose precise nature was yet to become clear, and which had no real roots in Welsh tradition since the country had never been united under one of its native leaders—except briefly and still incompletely by Llywelyn ap Grufudd, who at the time was actually resented by many Welsh.[98]

Probably quite typical is the case of one Welsh family descended from a court official of Llywelyn ap Grufudd and as yet without a surname, in place of which Welsh tradition used the *ap* 'son of'. In the fifteenth century, rather than changing in every generation, the name following the *ap* was often adopted as a fixed patronym. In this manner one Owain, son of Maredudd ap Tewdwr (Meredith son of Theodore), used his grandfather's name as a surname and called himself Owen Tudor in English. Following the occupation of Wales by Edward I and the death of Llywelyn in 1282, some members of the family had made peace with the English king immediately. Two direct forbears of Owen Tudor, Tewdwr Hen (i.e. the elder) and his son Goronwy, joined the rebellion of 1294, but they, too, ultimately made peace with Edward and served in the royal administration of north Wales. When Owain Glyn Dŵr rebelled, the family dominated Anglesey. Kinsmen of Owain Glyn Dŵr, two uncles of Owen Tudor joined the rebellion. Owen himself, too young to have any part in it (he was born around 1400), apparently profited from efforts by Henry V to conciliate the Welsh after the collapse of the rising, and gravitated to the royal court. Despite being of no particular prominence, he managed in 1429 secretly to wed the widow of king Henry VI, Catherine of Valois. The York and Lancaster branches of the royal house having fought over the crown until they were both extinct, in 1485 his descendant Henry Tudor mounted the English throne (champion of the already extinct Lancaster branch, he defeated the last York claimant, killed in that battle).

4.2.3.5 *France and the Hundred Years War*

As in the case of Scotland, the expansionist English kingship was unable to gain control of the kingdom of France, despite military superiority and a presentable claim to the French throne. In 1328, the direct male line of the Capet dynasty became extinct, as the sons of Philip IV, who succeeded him, left no male heir. This left king Edward III of England (reigns 1327–77), the son of Philip's daughter Isabella, as Philip's sole male descendant. Women were barred from succeeding to the French throne, and so there was no question of Isabella ascending the throne herself. But it was not clear whether women could pass on the right of succession. If so, then Edward III of England after 1328 was also king of France by right of inheritance. If, on the other hand, the exclusion of women from the throne was taken to imply that not only the crown, but also the right of succession could only be passed on in the male line, then the heir to the throne was Philip's nephew, the count of Valois (son of Philip's brother Charles, the unsuccessful rival of Henry of Luxemburg in the election for the Roman–German throne of 1308).

[98] On Owain's aims, his seal and title, and the Tripartite Indenture, see esp. Davies (1995: ch. 6).

Either interpretation could be argued with some plausibility—the typical backdrop of a war of succession in *ancien régime* Europe. In France, the prospect of the French crown being united to the English crown was not welcome. It would have meant depriving the French nobility of a source of prestige and preferment with which they had established ties in favour of magnates whose main attachment was to the English court. This, more than any 'national' sentiment, is likely to have been the main reason why the French preferred the Valois succession. After all, the English crown was not culturally alien. The English king was duke of Aquitaine, that is, one of the greatest lords in the French realm, and French was the language of the English court and the English nobility.

But Edward could not be expected simply to give up his claim. Militarily, he was in a promising position. His French possessions gave him a bridgehead on the continent, while the fact that England was an island made it difficult to strike at his base. What, in spite of such resounding victories as Crécy and Azincourt (the correct spelling), led to the ultimate defeat of the English crown in the 'Hundred Years War' was simply that the French, like the Scots, preferred to keep a king of their own. Edward I had sought to tread a fine line between confiscating Scottish estates, awarded to English magnates as an incentive for assisting him in the durable subjugation of Scotland, and not confiscating Scottish estates so as to keep some backing among the native magnates. Edward III resumed the attempt to bring Scotland under English control (through the client kingship of Edward Balliol) in part to allay the dissatisfaction of English nobles deprived of their Scottish gains by the earlier recognition of the Bruce kingship. What in Scotland proved unfeasible would have been even more difficult in France. To get military support in England for its French war, the English crown needed French spoils. But that made it impossible to get the political support of the French nobility—which was at least as necessary for the English crown to win recognition of its authority in France.

Edward III may have realized this. It is unlikely that he started the French war with the intention actually to deprive his Valois cousin of the French throne. Rather, he must have hoped to be able to sell his dynastic claim—for doing which it was necessary to assert it militarily first, to show his determination not to give it up for free. The most obvious prize that he could aim for was a quitclaim for Aquitaine, removing the irksome obligation on the English king to do homage for this fief to the French crown, and instead incorporating it in the English kingdom proper. From a French perspective, however, this was already a huge concession, not to be granted except in an extremity.

Edward successfully created that extremity, defeating and capturing king John II of France at Poitiers in 1356. He even laid siege to Reims in 1360—as if threatening actually to have himself crowned king of France, a ceremony normally held in Reims cathedral. The fact that the siege was quickly lifted suggests, however, that it was essentially symbolical, a means of putting pressure on the French. Indeed they agreed on a sweeping peace settlement, involving the cession of Aquitaine in return for Edward abandoning his claim to the French throne. But the settlement was eventually ratified by neither side—ultimately no doubt because it was so unbalanced in favour of the English that even they did not consider it viable in the long term. King John was released in return for a promised payment of three million *écus* to the English crown. Hostages at the English court were to vouch for this, among them a younger brother of the French crown prince. When he returned to France without authorization, king John voluntarily went back to London, where he died in 1364—a striking demonstration of attachment to a chivalrous code of honour.

His successor Charles V avoided major showdowns with the English, which the French had an alarming tendency to lose, and preferred diplomatic means to check the ambition of the English king. Count Louis of Flanders wanted to marry his daughter and sole heir to a younger son of Edward III, Edmund. This would have given the English dynasty another of the great French principalities in addition to Aquitaine. King Charles, for his part, sought the hand of the Flemish heiress for his brother Philip, whom he had created duke of Burgundy. Both Edmund and Philip were so closely related to their prospective bride that the marriage required a papal dispensation. It was Charles who secured it, not Edward, a triumph for the French king—even if it ultimately led to another big problem for the French monarchy in the shape of the virtually independent 'Burgundian' realm, a development that at the time could not be foreseen. The episode again illustrates the huge importance of legal considerations for the politics of the period, where warfare was unlikely to be successful unless it was in support of what could plausibly be considered a valid legal claim, or if at least it did not run too visibly counter to any such claim. No amount of English military strength could alter the papal decision awarding Flanders to the Valois rather than the Plantagenet dynasty.

In subsequent generations the (rather intermittently fought) war between the two royal houses became more acrimonious. Unable to turn their military prowess into any lasting settlement in their favour, the English grew more reckless. This culminated in the coronation of the English boy king, Henry VI, as king of France in Paris in 1431, after king Charles VI of France had been prevailed on to marry his daughter Catherine to Henry (she was later to marry Owen Tudor) and disinherit his son, the future Charles VII, in favour of the English crown. But the timid Charles was famously persuaded by Joan of Arc to have himself crowned at Reims anyway. Reims was the right place to do it, not Paris, and this symbolized the greater legitimacy personified by Charles. The English side had gone too far, and in the end the English crown (which stubbornly continued to claim the title 'king/queen of France' throughout the *ancien régime*) even lost Aquitaine.

4.2.4 The fiction of the efficient ruler: Thomas Aquinas and Giles of Rome

The powerful popular attachment to the crown led to positive qualities and achievements being attributed to the crown that existed only in the imagination of its loyal adherents. The crown was credited with ensuring the peace of the realm and the safety of its subjects, and with causing other benefits to accrue to them, when in reality it was quite incapable of doing any such thing. No doubt by the end of the *ancien régime* the actual efficiency of central government had increased compared with the pre-Reformation period, but its perceived efficiency was still largely based on a legitimizing fiction.

Already in the twelfth century, the panegyric on the emperor Frederic I by the anymous poet known as the *Archipoeta* or 'archpoet' incongruously praises Frederic for stamping out banditry in Italy. Stanza 28 explains that the roads of Italy used to be infested with robber bands. The poet continues:

Cesaris est gloria,/Cesaris est donum,	Caesar's is the glory, Caesar's gift it is
Quod iam patent omnibus/vie regionum,	That now the roads of the land are open to all,
Dum ventis exposita/corpora latronum	While, exposed to the winds, the robbers' corpses
Surda flantis boree/captant aure sonum.	Catch the rustling northern breeze in their deaf ears.

The poet drives home his point by making a statement—the emperor has rid the country of robbers—and illustrating it graphically by letting the audience imagine the dead robbers dangling from gallows or trees and deaf to the blowing of the 'northern breeze' (meaning the emperor, come from north of the Alps). Of course this is pure hyperbole: intent on imposing his authority on the rebellious towns of northern Italy (the poet narrates at some length the capture of haughty Milan in 1162), the emperor cannot have had much time to deal with robbers. Even if some suffered the fate indicated by the poet, it was a drop in the bucket, a success strictly limited in terms of space and time, as other robbers no doubt quickly filled the 'vacancies' created while in most parts of Italy they remained unaffected by any imperial activity. That the poet brings up the subject at all may be connected to some specific occasion or incident highlighting the issue, though I have no knowledge of what it could have been.

People in Italy of course could not rely on the itinerant emperor to address the problem of banditry. Frederic I came to Italy five times during his reign (1152–90), which is unusually often in comparison with his predecessors. Even so he was more of an absence than a presence, quite apart from the fact that even northern Italy, the only part of the country where his writ ran, is quite large. There was no permanent imperial administrative apparatus controlling the empire in its entirety, let alone Italy. But it is significant that the poet happily attributes to the crown a spurious achievement or at least one that he complacently inflates out of all proportion with reality. The attribution is emphasized very strongly in the first line of the stanza quoted, which describes the safety of the roads as the 'glory' and 'gift' of the emperor. By means of the word order and through repetition the phrasing places heavy stress on *Cesaris* 'Caesar's'.

Good-humouredly (the whole poem is in a somewhat ironic vein, as if gently mocking the commonplace, even trite notions that it deals in) the poet ascribes to the emperor all the usual regal virtues and, importantly, stresses the indebtedness of the subjects (stanza 5):

Tu foves et protegis/magnos et minores,	*You* look after and protect the great and the less great,
Magnis et minoribus/tue patent fores.	The great and the less great find your doors open.
Omnes ergo Cesari/sumus debitores,	All of us therefore are debtors of Caesar,
Qui pro nostra requie/sustinet labores.	Who for the sake of our peace takes exertions upon himself.

Note again the *tu* 'you' placed at the beginning of the first line and the more resonant as, in Latin, nominative personal pronouns are exclusively used for emphasis. In the society of the 1160s, when the poem was written, this sort of claim was utterly counterfactual. Northern Italy demonstrates this well: nominally subject to the German crown, most of the time it was left completely to its own devices. On the rare occasions when the king or emperor 'of the Romans' did appear in Italy, this regularly caused more, not less instability and indeed warfare, as the poem under discussion also unintentionally shows. For the long-term development of pre-Reformation northern Italy the imperial presence or absence proved irrelevant as, unruly and war-prone though it was, the country nevertheless rose to spectacular economic prosperity.

In late *ancien régime* Europe, rulers were routinely idolized in essentially the same manner that is already manifest in the twelfth-century panegyric on the emperor Frederic, and which, the treatment of this type of thinking by the 'archpoet' suggests, was

well-worn and clichéd even then. It is the fact that this habit of praising rulers was already established at a time when clearly the assertions involved were wholly unbelievable that should alert us to the possibility that it may not have been any more solidly founded in fact in the eighteenth century than in the twelfth century. Rulers in *ancien régime* Europe were not idolized because they were strong, but, conversely, gained much of their political strength from this well-ingrained habit of idolization.

What could be called the theme of fictive efficiency of princely governance is prominent in two influential thirteenth-century political thinkers, Thomas Aquinas and Giles of Rome. In an unfinished treatise known as *De regimine principum* 'On the governance of princes' or *De regno* 'On kingship', and datable to about 1265/70, Thomas (∼1225–74) pioneered the application of Aristotelian ideas to the subject of social organization that would become the hallmark of the political thought of the scholastics. Closely following Aristotle, Thomas explains the evolution of human communities as a result of the striving for autarchy.

> Since man is destined to live as part of a group [*in multitudine*], because he cannot on his own fulfil the requirements of life [*sibi non sufficit ad necessaria vitae si solitarius maneat*], the fellowship of the group [*multitudinis societas*] must be the more perfect the more it is able to fulfil the requirements of life on its own.[99]

For Aristotle, the *pólis* allowed complete *autárkeia*: nobody, for Aristotle, needed anything beyond, and that of course also meant, on a level above, the *pólis*. In Latin christendom, the enthusiastic appropriation of Aristotelian thinking inevitably raised the question of how princely rule over more than one city could be justified. Thomas 'solves' this problem by invoking the need for common defence.

> In a city, which is the perfect community [*quae est perfecta communitas*], are found all the necessities of life. Yet still more so is this the case in a country, because of the need to fight together and of mutual assistance against enemies.[100]

It is evident from this how difficult it could be to reconcile Aristotelian ideas with contemporary social reality. If the city was already a *communitas perfecta* (the *koinônía téleios* of the Greek original, e.g. *Politiká* 1252*b* 29), how could the *provincia* or country be perfecter still?[101] Unlike Aristotle, who explicitly rejects this approach for the *pólis*,[102] Thomas uses utilitarian reasoning to justify community at every level, from the house via the village to the city and beyond to the *provincia*, the task assigned to that latter community being defence against enemies. But if we are to go beyond the city at all, why stop at the *provincia*? If uniting towns facilitates their defence, why not unite countries? In Thomas' treatise the king is always king only of a city or a (=one) *provincia*. He repeatedly refers to *civitas vel provincia* (or the other way around)—a somewhat tortured

[99] Thomas Aquinas, *De regimine principum* 1.2. Latin text in Thomas Aquinas, *Opera omnia*, ed. by Roberto Busa, vol. 3, my trans.

[100] Thomas, *De regimine* 1.2.

[101] The word *provincia* has the meaning '[independent] country' already in late antiquity, as is clear from a passage quoted in the last chapter (Paulus Orosius 5.1.14, supra ch. 3, n. 222). The word still retained the meaning 'country' in 18th-cent. German (e.g. *Teutschland ist . . . diejenige Provinz Europens, welche . . .*, 'Germany is . . . that country of Europe which' etc., Moser 1766: 22). It thus seems safe to assume that 'country' is the meaning that Thomas had in mind.

[102] Cf. supra ch. 3, n. 351.

homage to the *philosophus*, since if it had not been for Aristotle the 'city' would not have played any very prominent role in the political thinking of the period at all. No king of Latin christendom was king of a city, the institution of kingship as it existed then being inherently un-urban in origin. Even if for Aristotle this was perhaps not the conscious reason for denying that the *pólis* served the purpose of common defence, it certainly saved him from the logical trap into which Thomas walks: his emphasis on merging communities for the sake of better defence must culminate in the political union of all mankind, unless some other criterion is introduced to establish where the process is to stop. Thomas, however, offers no such criterion. He seems to have taken existing kingdoms for granted. There is no allusion to the possibility of merging kingdoms—another indication, perhaps, of how unthinkable that had become.

Of course, merging people into larger communities for the purpose of common defence presupposed that peace could be maintained *within* those communities.

> The advantage [or interest, *bonum*] and the welfare [*salus*] of an organized group [*consociata multitudo*] is the preservation of that unity which we call peace; without it any utility of life in society [*socialis vita*] is lost, and a group at odds with itself will be a burden for itself. The most important goal of the leader of a group [*rector multitudinis*] must therefore be to establish the unity of peace.[103]

Domestic concord and peace are here treated as synonymous. This definition of peace leaves out any consideration of external relations, the opposite of what we are accustomed to nowadays. For Thomas, defence against external enemies is important, yes, but they are not a threat to 'peace'. It is likely that in fact he did not consider them much of a threat at all, as indeed in thirteenth-century Latin christendom (or, for that matter, in the pre-christian Graeco-Roman world) they were not. Violent conflict took place mainly within kingdoms, certainly if they were large. Of course such conflict might also (but rarely exclusively) involve 'foreign' enemies, but since more often than not it did not the absence of peace was not seen as a 'foreign'-political problem.

Opposed, on this issue, to Aristotle, Thomas without much ado concludes from the great importance of domestic concord that monarchy is necessary. He does add the claim that experience [*experimenta*] showed monarchy to best:

> For countries and cities not governed by a single person [*quae non reguntur ab uno*] suffer from dissension and in the absence of peace lack stability [*absque pace fluctuant*]. . . . Conversely, countries or cities governed by one king [*quae sub uno rege reguntur*] enjoy peace, prosper through justice, and live in happy abundance.[104]

In chapter 1.16, Thomas notes three threats to the common weal (*bonum publicum* or *res publica*—the assumption that he uses the two expressions synonymously cannot be proved from the text of the treatise but is compatible with it). First, the infirmity that comes with old age, which according to Thomas makes it necessary for the king to replace officials (*qui officiis praesunt*) in time; the question of what to do with an infirm king is not addressed. Secondly, a perverted frame of mind (*perversitas voluntatum*): people were lazy (*desides*) or indeed maliciously disturbed the 'peace of others'. Therefore it was

[103] Thomas, *De regimine* 1.3.

[104] Thomas, *De regimine* 1.3. *sub uno rege* '*by* one king': this un-'classical' usage of a preposition other than *ab* to express agency is typical of the Latin of the period.

incumbent on the king 'by his laws and mandates, by punishments and inducements, to force those subject to him to abstain from injustice, and to encourage them to engage in virtuous activities, following the example of god, who gives laws to man, rewarding those who observe them, and punishing those who do not.' Third—lastly!—external aggression: it was incumbent on the king 'to render the group subject to him safe from enemies [*ut multitudo sibi subiecta contra hostes tuta reddatur*]. For it would be no use to avoid internal danger, if one were unable to ward off external danger.'

Thomas then explains that 'in founding a city or kingdom' (*in institutione civitatis aut regni*: the phrase suggests that *regnum* and *provincia* are indeed used synonymously) one should prefer locations with a moderate climate, since this brought 'great advantage with respect to the wars by means of which human fellowship is rendered safe'.[105] No notion here of 'wars' being a threat to society, on the contrary; which of course made them unsuitable as an antonym of 'peace'. In support of this stance Thomas invokes Vegetius and cites examples given by that author. They refer to peoples or polities of the pre-christian Mediterranean world, much more clearly set apart from each other than the peoples forming part of Latin christendom. To be sure, Vegetius himself wrote in the fourth or fifth century CE. But, on the one hand, he was essentially compiling material from pre-christian writers, and on the other in his appreciation of the positive contribution of wars must have been thinking of the universal Roman empire—a 'fellowship' that, unlike the kingdoms of Latin christendom, was indeed in his day kept in being through continual wars against the 'barbarians' beyond its borders. What Vegetius had in mind was inapplicable to the social and political reality of thirteenth-century Latin christendom. If Thomas invokes Vegetius anyway, it is simply out of respect for a prestigious Roman author—widely read in Latin christendom from what seems to have been a fascination with Roman militaria at least among clerics, even though, as Guy Halsall has pointed out, there is no evidence that his advice was followed in practice by military leaders in the field.[106]

Illustrative examples in Thomas' treatise are either taken from the bible or from Roman history (rarely from Greek history) but never from the contemporary world. The whole treatise is a mishmash of pre-christian and early christian thinking. Aristotle's concept of *koinônía* is somewhat nonchalantly extended beyond the 'city'. Vegetius' praise of belligerence and military virtue is cited despite being alien to the thinking of the *Politiká*—yet no attempt is made to reconcile the two. The king is presented as a lawgiver in the manner of Aristotle's *nomothéthês* or the late Roman *princeps*—but the kingship of the period was largely bereft of legislative power. More generally, Thomas simply asserts that the king should do x, y, and z but wastes not a word on how he might do it and what kind of obstacles he might encounter. Any real existing king of the period was far from having the sovereign power within his kingdom that this presupposes. If Thomas clearly saw nothing wrong with implying such power, what we have here is the same phenomenon as the archpoet claiming that Frederic I had rid Italy of robbers.

It is an interesting mental experiment to imagine that Thomas' treatise were the only surviving evidence on the political organization of the period. We would then have no hint that the political reality of thirteenth-century Latin christendom was actually

[105] *ad opportunitates bellorum, quibus tuta redditur humana societas, regionis temperies plurimum valet*. Thomas, *De regimine* 2.1.

[106] Halsall (2003: 145).

characterized, more than anything else, by *decentralization* of power, by the absence of any monopoly on legitimate violence, by a universally recognized right of free men to resist demands that they considered unjust, and by the near-impossibility even for a king to go against established custom. If one thing emerges clearly, it is the paramountcy, the supreme legitimacy that Thomas takes it for granted is vested in kingship—not in the imperial office, nor in lower-ranking political players, neither of which figure in the treatise. And this *despite* the fact that the great Aristotle, invoked over and over by Thomas, was no great friend of monarchy. It is the idolization and idealization of kingship that makes this treatise important—a treatise that in other respects is of such poor intellectual quality that one wonders whether its author perhaps left it unfinished out of frustration with himself.

Yet his theme was evidently of general interest. After Thomas' death, the treatise was 'finished' by his pupil Tholomeus of Lucca. At any rate, Tholomeus around 1300 made four books (in the sense of subdivisions of the treatise) out of the one that the master had completed and a second that he had only begun, without sticking to the plan of the work announced by Thomas in his introduction. Another pupil, Giles of Rome (Aegidius Romanus; ∼1243–1316) as early as about 1280 produced a treatise of his own, likewise known under the title *De regimine principum*, which takes up the reasoning put forward by Thomas and, while often following it closely, also greatly expands on it. Plodding and repetitive, the book nevertheless was a runaway success. With at least 362 extant manuscripts (in the original Latin or in vernacular translation), it was one of the most widely disseminated books of the pre-Reformation period; the number of extant pre-Reformation manuscripts of works now held in much greater esteem is about thirty each for the *Monarchia* of Dante Alighieri, the *De potestate* of Jean Quidort, the *Defensor pacis* of Marsilius of Padua, or the *Dialogus* of William of Ockham.[107]

'If we examine the said *Politiká* [of Aristotle] closely', Giles writes with fine disregard for the truth, 'it will appear that there are four types of community: to wit, that of the house, that of the village, that of the city, and that of the kingdom.'[108] In reality, of course, the last-named community is not found in Aristotle, as Giles well knew. Chapter 3.1.1 is announced as showing 'that the community of the city is in some way the most important [*Quod communitas civitatis est aliquo modo principalissima*]'. Explicitly invoking Aristotle, Giles deduces this from its superordination over the community of the house and the community of the village. But Giles then adds, without any reference to Aristotle since none would have been possible, that there is a still more important (*principalior*) community than that of the city, 'such as the community of the kingdom [*cuiusmodi est communitas regni*]'. One may wonder how there can be a community more important than the most important.[109]

[107] Based on data in Cheneval (1995: 19–20) and Miethke (1991: 92 n). The 1998 edn. of the *De ortu* of Engelbert of Admont identifies nineteen manuscripts, but the list is incomplete; Engelbert (1998: 285), criticized in Ubl (1999). The 1607 edn. of Giles' treatise quoted here exists in a facsimile reprint, but as far as I am aware there is no recent edn. of the Latin text—the critical edn. of Giles' complete works begun in 1985 at the initiative of Francesco del Punta seems to be making slow progress. There is a recent edn. of the 14th-cent. English trans. of the treatise by John Trevisa (Giles 1997). In quoting from this trans. I have converted Þ/þ to Th/th, but retained the letter yogh (ȝ), since this does not correspond to any single letter or combination of letters in present-day English.

[108] *si dicta Politica diligenter consideremus, apparebit quadruplicem esse communitatem, videlicet, domus, vici, civitatis, et regni.* Giles of Rome, *De regimine principum* 2.1.2 (1607: 220).

[109] Giles, *De regimine* 3.1.1 (1607: 403).

Giles explains that the community of the house exists for the sake of those things that we need every day. But since not all requirements of life can be found in a single house, the village community is also needed, so that what is not found in one house may be found in another. Yet, because even so not everything that is necessary might be found, we have the community of the city. So this latter community 'clearly exists to supply everything that is needed in life' (*communitas ergo civitatis esse videtur ad supplendam indigentiam in tota vita*). But again it is not enough: 'However, since it happens that cities may be at war, it is useful [*utile*] for a city to ally itself [*confoederare se*] to a second city so as to defeat [*ad expugnandum*] another city.' Giles also at this point drops into his text the concept of what he calls, somewhat enigmatically, *prohibentia corruptiva*, or obstacles of ill effect: things that not only stand in the way of what one wants to achieve, but which actually do harm, such as, precisely, enemy attacks (John Trevisa, in his fourteenth-century English translation, renders this variably and rather vaguely—in this instance as *greues* [*griefs*] *that destroyeth*).

So, since an alliance of cities is useful for fighting enemies, and for removing obstacles of ill effect, beyond the community of the house, the village, and the city the community of the kingdom or principality was created. It is an alliance of several castles and cities existing under one prince or king [*inventa fuit communitas regni et principatus, quae est confoederatio plurium castrorum et civitatum existentium sub uno principe sive sub uno Rege*].

Giles here highlights an aspect largely absent from his pre-christian exemplar. In Aristotle, followed on this by Thomas and also Giles himself, human association serves to achieve positive things that would not otherwise happen. But, Giles implicitly objects, what about preventing negative things that we do not want to happen? Of course, it can be argued that in Aristotle this is simply subsumed under the positive things, under the general (positive) rubric of *autárkeia* or *eu zên*. Thomas, as we saw, wants the king 'to force those subject to him to abstain from injustice'. Yet Giles has a point in insisting on this aspect as a logically distinct category, and uses it to justify his position that the supreme community is really the 'kingdom or principality'. This notion of rule-as-prevention had a great future, culminating in Thomas Hobbes.

Elsewhere Giles dedicates a special chapter to the demonstration 'that beyond the community of the city the community of the kingdom was useful for human life' (3.1.5: *Quod praeter communitatem civitatis, utile fuit in vita humana esse communitatem regni*). For Giles, this could be shown in three ways: with respect to the self-sufficiency of life (*sufficientia vitae*), with respect to the acquisition of virtue (*adeptio virtutis*), and finally with respect to defence and the removal of hostile obstacles (*defensio et remotio impedimentorum hostium*; John: *defence and withstondynge of enemyes*).[110]

Concerning the first point, Giles incongruously claims that, for example, a village with smiths could not be self-sufficient unless associated with a village with weavers. Likewise, he goes on, some cities had an excess of wine and lacked wheat, and so it was useful to bring several cities together in one principality or kingdom (*civitates plures congregari sub uno principatu aut sub uno regno*). Thomas (*De regimine* 1.2) attributes to the village *unum artificium*, 'one/a [single] craft', and Giles apparently took his cue from this. It is possible that Thomas understood *unum* simply as an indefinite article and did not intend to stress, and perhaps not even to imply, that in a typical village only one

[110] Giles, *De regimine* 3.1.5 (1607: 411; 1997: 294).

craft was exercised; maybe the phrase could be rendered as 'some craft'. However, John Trevisa in his translation of Giles regularly renders *unus* by a fourteenth-century English equivalent of 'one', not by the indefinite article. Anyway, it is hard to imagine that Giles actually knew of any village specializing in a single craft as suggested in his example. Moreover, such a village would not fit the description given earlier by Giles himself, of the village community existing for the sake of 'non-daily activities' (in the plural). Further, Giles cannot have it both ways; first claiming that the city is there to 'provide for life as a whole', and then that it might have to import essential foodstuffs. Finally, even if it did, it would not follow from that that it should be within the same kingdom as its economic partners. Thirteenth-century long-distance trade (e.g. in wheat) took little account of, and was scarcely impeded by, borders between one kingdom or principality and the next.

Concerning the second point—the acquisition of virtue—Giles posits that the intention of the 'lawgiver' (*legislator* = *nomothétês* in Aristotle, John: he *that ȝeven the lawe*) must not only be to ensure that the 'citizens' (*cives* = *polítai*) have what they want to cover their physical needs (*habeant quae requiruntur, ad supplendam indigentiam corporalem*), but also, as in Thomas, that they live virtuously and in accordance with the law (*secundum legem et virtuose*).

> Those governing the city therefore must have military power so as to coerce and punish those who do not want to live virtuously and disturb the peace and the good standing of the other citizens [John: *Thanne the rector of a citee mot haue cyuyl* (=military, see note) *myȝt and power that he may compelle hem that wol not lyue vertuousliche and hem that disturblen the pees and good astaat of the citeseyns*].

Giles thinks that 'the evil men in a city will not dare rise against a prince if they know that he has great military power and is a lord of many cities'; hence, for the sake of virtuous life and the punishment of evil men cities should be joined together under one ruler. The terminology ('lawgiver', 'citizens') is Aristotelian, and alien to the political and legal reality of thirteenth-century Latin christendom. On the other hand, Aristotle would have been shocked at the notion that virtue, however desirable, could be enforced militarily, or that to facilitate this, the citizens should sacrifice the independence of their city. In any case, Giles is fantasizing. The crown had no very significant part (if any) in policing the average thirteenth-century kingdom. Nor could it be said of cities largely free from princely intervention—for example, the imperial free cities of Germany, or the cities of northern Italy—that they were any more lawless than, for example, cities that were actual royal residences. Even Giles in fact qualifies the passage just discussed by adding that it presupposed trust in the righteousness of the ruler, implying a right of resistance if that were lacking.[111]

Concerning the third and final point—defence against external enemies—Giles repeats that cities will find it easier to ward off attacks by allying themselves with other cities, and

[111] *Oportet ergo rectores civitatis habere civilem potentiam, ut possint cogere et punire nolentes virtuose vivere, et turbantes pacem et bonum statum aliorum civium. Quare cum perversi in civitate aliqua non audeant insurgere contra principem, si sciant ipsum magnam habere civilem potentiam, et dominare in civitatibus multis, si constet de principe quod iuste regat et quod non convertatur in tyrannum, expedit civitatibus propter virtuose vivere, et propter corruptionem perversorum congregari sub uno regno.* Giles, *De regimine* 3.1.5 (1607: 412; 1997: 295). Giles oddly uses *civilis potentia* in the sense of 'military power', as is shown unambiguously by his discussion of Vegetius in ch. 1.1.10. In criticizing Vegetius and denouncing warlikeness Giles for once parts company with Thomas.

that a kingdom is really an alliance of cities, by virtue of the fact that they are united under one king (*cum ergo regnum sit quasi quaedam confoederatio plurium civitatum, eo quod uniantur sub uno rege*), with the king obliged to direct the joint resources of those cities against attacks on any one of them. Hence the utility of forming the single community of the kingdom. Or as John Trevisa puts it:

a regne is as it were a confideracioun and couenant of manye citees for to be ioned vnder o [=one] kyng that schal defende eche partie [=part] of the regne and ordeyne cyuel [=military] my3t and power of othere citees to defence of eche cytee of the regne 3if it is ouersette with strangers.[112]

Giles like Thomas remarks repeatedly that 'experience' showed that cities (or countries: *provinciae*) not united under a single king tended to suffer more from warfare and be less prosperous. The last point, as observed earlier, is belied by the prosperity of the un-united and bellicose cities of northern Italy.[113]

Of course, as noted, historically no kingdom of Latin christendom arose from an alliance of cities: the importance ascribed to the latter results from their prominence in Aristotle. Conversely, Giles, like Thomas, simply leaves out that which *really* made up a kingdom, to a far greater extent than 'cities', and which remained at least as important as cities throughout the *ancien régime*: lordships. The reason must be that, on the one hand, this is not a category found in Aristotle. On the other hand, it was not a category that Thomas or Giles *wanted* to deal with, as that would have distracted from the single focus on kingship. They present an image of kingship or princely rule that can only be described as utopian, a fantasy. Yet, as the success of Giles' book in particular shows, it was a fantasy that many were ready to share.

No more than Thomas does Giles provide a criterion determining why given cities should be part of one kingdom rather than another, or why there should be more than one kingdom in the first place. As with Thomas, everything that he adduces in favour of uniting cities could easily be adapted to call for the establishment of universal monarchy, for the uniting of all mankind under a single king or emperor. Logically, one can only either adopt Aristotle's position and declare that the *pólis* really can be self-sufficient and no larger community is necessary. Or one follows writers like Dante Alighieri, Engelbert of Admont, and indeed Pierre Dubois, all of whom saw that once one went beyond the level of cities there was no reason to stop short of positing a single political community of mankind, or at least of christendom. But if Thomas and Giles—as well as Bodin or Hobbes, for that matter—got away with ignoring this issue, it was because, throughout the *ancien régime*, external enemies never did threaten the survival of any established kingship or indeed principality. Significantly, in Thomas as in Giles this aspect, if used as one argument for kingship among several, is invariably treated last.

[112] Giles, *De regimine* 3.1.5 (1607: 412; 1997: 295).

[113] *videmus enim civitates non existentes sub uno rege plures guerras et discordias habere ad invicem* (*we seen that citees that ben not vnder oo kyng hauen ofte greet discord and stryf eche with other*). Giles, *De regimine* 3.1.6 (1607: 414; 1997: 296)—*Experti enim sumus civitates et provincias non existentes sub uno rege esse in penuria, non gaudere in pace, molestari dissensionibus et guerris: existentes vero sub uno rege, e contrario, guerras nesciunt, pacem sectantur, abundantia florent* (*For we knowen and seen that citees* [*provincias* goes untranslated here] *that ben not vnder oon kyng ben in pouert and in meschef and not in pees but ben agreued with stryf and werre. And citees that ben vnder oon kyng a3enward, and hauen non werre but pees and plente*). Ibid. 3.2.3 (1607: 458; 1997: 327–8).

4.2.5 The imperial office as an archetype of monarchical rule: Nicholas of Kues and Enea Silvio Piccolomini

We saw that both Thomas and Giles treat the king as legislator. The concept as such they found in Aristotle, but according to Roman law in its Justinianic redaction this was a capacity reserved for the Roman emperor. On the other hand, it was obvious that the emperor had long ceased to control christendom in its entirety, resulting, by the turn of the thirteenth century, in a current in legal thought that tended to negate the difference between kingship and the imperial office. Thus, in the 1190s the English legal scholar Richard de Lacy noted that 'both emperor and king owe their office to [literally: are anointed by] the same authority [the church], the same consecration, the same chrism. Where, therefore, would any difference in their powers come from?'[114]

That there was no such difference meant that *rex est imperator in regno suo*, a king is emperor in his own kingdom, in the famous formula coined around the same time by Italian lawyers.[115] Pope Innocent III, himself a legal scholar, gave added weight to this position in his decretal (legal opinion) *Per venerabilem* of 1202, which famously says of the French king that 'in temporal affairs he recognizes no superior at all [*superiorem in temporalibus minime recognosc*(*i*)*t*].' Therefore, according to Innocent, the French king had the right to turn directly to the pope to have an heir issued from a marriage of doubtful validity confirmed by the pope, whereas a prince subject to a feudal superior, like count William of Montpellier, to whom the document is addressed, did not. The position here adopted by Innocent was a double slight to the Roman crown: not only did the pope implicitly deny its superordination to the French crown, but the legitimation of bastards was normally held to be an *imperial* right. Innocent is thus in effect annexing part of the imperial office to the papacy (on grounds set out at some length in the decretal), in line with a trend towards turning the pope into some sort of emperor himself. Indeed, although saying that the French crown had no temporal superior sounds magnanimous, both the arrogation of the right to pronounce on this and the exercise, vis-à-vis the French king, of the imperial right to legitimize bastards went some way towards asserting *papal* suzerainty over the French crown. In another decretal of the same year, *Venerabilem fratrem*, Innocent explicitly claimed suzerainty over the Roman crown, declaring that the newly elected king of Romans needed to be approved by him (a position which, however, was never accepted in Germany); and in 1213 Innocent made king John of England do homage to him and submit to papal suzerainty for his kingdom in order to be received back into the church. This trend towards an imperial papacy culminated in, and failed with, Boniface VIII. We saw how contemporary chronicles depict Boniface with imperial insignia and even claiming the imperial dignity for himself as he rejects the request of the king of Romans, Albert, to be crowned emperor in 1298.[116]

His imperial pretensions, in particular the bull *Unam sanctam* of 1302, for once led to a massive falling out between the pope and the French king rather than the Roman crown, and indeed to a rapprochement between Boniface and Albert. Reversing the stance taken by his predecessor Innocent a hundred years earlier, the pope peremptorily declared the French king to be subject to the Roman crown (Albert in turn had declared himself

[114] *cum uterque tam imperator quam rex eadem auctoritate, eadem consecratione, eodem crismate inungitur, unde ergo potestatis diversitas est?* Quoted van den Baar (1956: 96–7).

[115] Calasso (1957).

[116] Supra ch. 3, n. 240.

homo papae, accepting papal suzerainty).[117] This interlude was shortlived: ten years later the emperor Henry VII once more found pope Clement V and the French king united (more or less) in their opposition to him, reaffirming the prevailing pattern of conflict between the papacy and the Roman crown. Not least simply because the territory of the latter included parts of Italy, it was tempting for the papacy to play more distant rulers against it—more particularly the French king, who was happy to go along with this. (The opposition of the papacy to the emergence of a rival power centre in Italy was a recurrent pattern ever since it invited the Frankish king to attack the Lombards in the eighth century, the very move that, ironically, led to the re-establishment of the western imperial dignity in the first place.) Had they been consistently united, pope and emperor might have been invincible; as it was, their disunity weakened both and helped promote the autonomy (never actually threatened) of the other realms.

From 1250 to 1312, there was no emperor, and the king of Romans was weak. In such circumstances it made little sense to deny that a king could make laws just as the emperor once did. Although some still had misgivings about this, Thomas and Giles already take it for granted. Indeed their (utopian) king is clearly an absolute ruler, like the Roman *princeps* of old—or the pope of their own day: not fortuitously, Giles of Rome at a later stage of his career became an outspoken supporter of the notion of papal suzerainty over christendom, including in secular matters, a position expressed in his other famous treatise *De potestate ecclesiastica* ('On the powers of the church') of 1301/2. As we saw, Thomas and Giles in their writings on kingship do not discuss the issue of political organization beyond the level of the kingdom. But by the fifteenth century, even those who developed a theory of the empire—concretely, Nicholas of Kues and Enea Silvio Piccolomini—expound a notion of rulership that is closer to the activist kingship portrayed by Thomas and Giles than to the conservative, minimalist conception of the imperial office put forward by Engelbert and Dante. Both Nicholas and Enea Silvio were travelling further in the direction indicated earlier by Thomas and Giles, along a road that was to lead to the 'absolutism' of the post-Reformation period.

4.2.5.1 *Nicholas of Kues and Sigismund of Luxemburg*

In the fifteenth century, the notion of Latin christendom as a single community repeatedly found dramatic expression in the form of general councils, assemblies not just of church dignitaries, but also of secular notables from all parts of christendom—in particular the councils of Konstanz (1414–18) and Basel (later moved to Lausanne, 1431–49). The councils were a forum for discussing the reform of the church, the current condition of which was the object of widespread and fundamental criticism. Foreshadowing the Reformation, already the Hussite movement in Bohemia had separated from the church of Rome in an attempt at radical reform, providing another topic of debate by the councils. The councils were dominated by a grass-roots movement calling for what one is tempted to call a democratization of the church, and which in the historiographical literature goes under the name 'the conciliar movement'. One major focus of criticism was the role of the pope, whom many wanted to put under the control of the councils—in a manner comparable to the efforts of the assemblies of estates that in the fifteenth century also sprang up or were consolidated in the secular realms and principalities of christendom,

[117] MGH Const. 4,1 no. 173.

and which aimed at establishing a degree of control (in this instance, financial control in particular) over their princes.

Among the tasks facing the council of Konstanz was ending the Great Schism, the rivalry between competing popes that had been going on for decades. The council therefore declared that it ranked higher than the popes (in the decree *Haec sancta*, 1415), initiated formal legal proceedings against two of the three claimants to the succession of Peter at this time, and, having condemned them, declared their deposition, this being a precondition for the voluntary withdrawal of the third candidate. The council then elected a new supreme pontiff to replace them all. The work of the council was facilitated by the king of Romans—as well as of Hungary—Sigismund of Luxemburg (great-grandson of Henry VII; nominally, in 1419 he also succeeded to the throne of Bohemia but until 1436 was prevented by the Hussites from actually occupying it). His arrival at the council in 1415 was the occasion for a great pageant, but his role in the proceedings was not merely symbolical. In an attempt to resolve some of the major quarrels within christendom, in the next two years he undertook a great deal of travelling—for example to the Aragonese court at Perpignan (where he held negotiations that succeeded in prevailing on the Spanish rulers and the king of Scots to withdraw their support for 'their' candidate to the papacy), and then to Paris and London (where he unsuccessfully tried to end the Hundred Years War). In 1417 Sigismund held a second, and even more spectacular formal entry into Konstanz.[118]

The papacy unsurprisingly took a detached view of the 'conciliar movement' and its activities. The council of Konstanz having, in the decree *Frequens* of 1417, mandated the calling of a new council after five years (then after seven years, and then once every ten years), pope Martin V—the one elected at Konstanz—reluctantly convened one at Pavia in 1423. It was poorly attended and soon dissolved. Sigismund was busy fighting the Turkish threat to his other kingdom, Hungary, and unable to intervene effectively. The next council assembled at Basel in 1431; like its predecessor it was at first attended poorly. The new pope Eugene IV was in a hurry to disband it again, but the council for its part initiated legal proceedings against him on the grounds that he had been elected in contravention of canon law. This generated much attention for it and attracted a big crowd of participants (anyone in christendom with either a title of nobility or an academic degree was free to take part—he simply had to register and swear an oath to observe the regulations governing the proceedings). Sigismund was on his way to Rome to receive the imperial crown when news reached him that Eugene had dissolved the council and convened another in Bologna. Inviting the Basel council to stay in session, Sigismund at the same time called on pope Eugene to rescind its dissolution in return for support against the accusations levelled at him by the council. Eugene complied, and Sigismund in 1433 held another triumphal entry at a general council of christendom, this time as freshly crowned emperor. He died in 1437. In 1439, the council declared Eugene deposed after all and elected an anti-pope. The new king of Romans Frederic of Habsburg (reigns 1440–93) at first remained neutral, but then inclined towards Eugene. Thus, against the background of the quarrel between the conciliar movement and the papacy, the emperor (whether or not he had already formally received that title—both Sigismund and Frederic eventually did) once more played an important role in christendom, or at the very least enjoyed a high degree of visibility.

[118] On Sigismund Hoensch (2000: ch. 6).

Among the participants of the Basel council was the theologian and philosopher Nicholas of Kues (a town in the Mosel valley, near Trier; the Latin version of the name is Nicolaus Cusanus or de Cusa) (1401–64). In 1433—the emperor Sigismund had just arrived in Basel—Nicholas addressed to the council and to the emperor a long treatise on no less a subject than christendom as a whole, known under the title *De concordantia catholica* ('On the universal concordance' or 'On the concordance of all things'). The treatise deals with the church in the wider sense (the christian people, but also supernatural beings like the different categories of angels, or god himself), the church as an earthly institution (whose hierarchical character, culminating in the pope, Nicholas underlines), and the secular organization of christendom. This is the subject of the last of the three books into which the treatise is divided, and takes up more than half of it. Significantly, for Nicholas the question of the secular organization of christendom is still simply identical with the question of the nature of the 'empire'. Nicholas demonstrates how different the perception of political 'reality' (to the extent that such a thing exists) at that time could be from what we are used to nowadays. An age for whose most astute intellects the existence, for example, of the nine choirs of angels was an unchallengeable given treated the question of the reality of the Roman empire in a different way from what would come naturally to us.[119]

In the introduction to Book III (§§268–91), Nicholas sets out the basic tenets of his political thinking, garnishing them with copious references to Aristotle—references gleaned from the *Defensor pacis* of Marsilius of Padua of 1324, a source that Nicholas does not acknowledge but the mistakes of whose quotes from Aristotle he faithfully reproduces; much else is borrowed from Marsilius, very much a proto-conciliarist thinker, too.[120] According to Nicholas, correct organization of any human community is predicated on rule over that community being exercised by the consent of the ruled; on the other hand, rule is indispensable because of the unequal intelligence of men and their unequal ability to hold evil passions in check. It is a requirement of nature that the wise (*sapientes*) should lead those who lack wisdom (*insipientes*), with the voluntary subjection (*voluntaria subiectio*) of the less wise to their betters dictated by a natural instinct (*naturalis instinctus*) and resulting in 'a kind of natural servitude [*quaedam naturalis servitus*]'.[121]

Among the various forms of rule, rule by a single person was preferable (§§282–3), though that person had to respect the laws where they existed. In this context, Nicholas quotes Aristotle to the effect that in the *politeía*, the proper, legitimate political community, only the laws should rule.[122] For Nicholas, the passing of laws (*legis latio*) was not the task of the ruler, but of all those who would be bound by the laws in question, or at least their elected representatives.[123] The ruler himself should be elected, if possible without regard for any hereditary claim, with the participation 'of all, or the majority,

[119] Nicholas of Kues (1959). The English trans. by Paul E. Sigmund (Nicholas of Kues 1991) is unreliable (to put it mildly). On Nicholas, see also e.g. Bellitto, Izbicki, and Christianson (2004); Lücking-Michel (1994); Posch (1930); Sigmund (1963); Walther (1976: 229–60); Watanabe (1963).

[120] Lücking-Michel (1994: 38). Nicholas does mention Marsilius at the end of Book II (§256), where he says that he only became aware of the *Defensor pacis* when he had almost finished *De concordantia*.

[121] Nicholas, *De concordantia* §271, cf. §274.

[122] Nicholas, *De concordantia* §§277, 279, quoting Aristotle, *Politiká* 1292*a* 32.

[123] *Legis autem latio per eos omnes, qui per eam stringi debent, aut maiorem partem aliorum electione fieri debet.* Nicholas, *De concordantia* §276.

or at least those among them of highest rank'.[124] This sort of thing is quite in line with 'conciliarism'; indeed, Nicholas also expressly endorsed the view that the authority of the council was above that of the pope.[125] It is likewise in line with (and evidently to a large extent copied from) Marsilius. Marsilius, too, had already stressed the authority of the council and assigned it prerogatives—for example, the right to elevate someone to sainthood—that were in fact exercised by the pope; he had also ascribed to the council authority to depose the pope.

At the same time, however, Nicholas was in favour of a markedly hierarchical social organization, with a strong position for the ruler. This was not very 'conciliar', and it seems that among the Basel radicals Nicholas felt increasingly uneasy. In 1437, he left Basel to join the counter-council that Eugene had convened in Ferrara and which was later moved to Florence. Eugene subsequently made Nicholas bishop of Brixen and created him a cardinal. In his later writings Nicholas keeps away from political subjects, and when he himself produced an edition of his collected works, the *Concordantia catholica* was not included. Perhaps the hastily written treatise by then seemed half-baked to him; besides, he may have been embarrassed by his flirtation with 'conciliarism'.

After the general introduction to Book III of the *Concordantia*, inspired by Marsilius, Nicholas proceeds to his discussion of the empire. For him—as a necessary corollary of the hierarchical organization (*hierarchica ordinatio*) of society, concretely christendom—the king of Romans is the first among kings, just as the bishop of Rome is the first among bishops.[126]

In what way is the 'holy empire' 'of god' (*quomodo imperium sacrum a deo*)? (For the expression 'of god' cf. Romans 13.1: *non est enim potestas nisi a Deo* 'there is no power but of God'.) Does it depend from god directly (*depend*[*e*]*t* [*a deo*] *immediate*, i.e. rather than by the intermediary of the pope)? Where is it situated at present (*ubi hodie exsist*[*i*]*t*)? Nicholas notes that those are questions that many contemporary scholars address differently and at length (*istae quaestiones varie ac prolixe per multos modernos doctores habentur*). He declares that he will not address them himself,[127] but then does so anyway—he was evidently writing in a hurry, which may explain certain inconsistencies.[128] He begins by debunking the Donation of Constantine (the eighth-century fake according to which the emperor Constantine I bestowed the imperial prerogatives in the west on the pope when he moved the capital of the empire to the Bósporos) and the notion of the *translatio imperii* or transferral of the empire (according to which when pope Leo III crowned the Frankish king emperor in 800 he was taking away the imperial dignity from Constantinople, a notion developed from the eleventh century onwards). Nicholas rejects both on the grounds that his extensive research failed to yield any mention of either in ancient sources where one would expect references to them (more famously, but a little later, the humanist scholar Lorenzo Valla demonstrated the inauthenticity of the Donation of Constantine on both historical and philological grounds).

[124] (*electio*) *omnium aut maioris partis vel saltem eorum procerum.* Nicholas, *De concordantia* §283.
[125] Nicholas, *De concordantia* e.g. §155.
[126] *sicut inter cunctos patriarchas Romanus est primus, ita inter cunctos reges Romanorum rex.* Nicholas, *De concordantia* §293.
[127] Nicholas, *De concordantia* §294.
[128] Sigmund (1963: 188); Watanabe (1963: 129).

This was tantamount to positing the independence of the empire from the papacy.[129] But what was the emperor needed for? According to Nicholas, the empire as such was not universal, since there were kings and princes not subject to the emperor. Nonetheless, the emperor was the guardian of the universal faith and the keeper of the universal statutes (*universalis fidei custos ac statutorum universalium conservator*: a position close to that outlined by patriarch Antony in his letter to Moscow). In that capacity he could, according to Nicholas, even pass laws (*leges*) that bound those who otherwise '*de facto* or by privilege' did not recognize the suzerainty of the empire and who therefore 'perhaps' were not bound by other imperial laws.[130]

As was warranted by the circumstances in which this treatise was written or at least finished, Nicholas discusses at some length the role of the emperor at the council. He recalls that in previous ages this role was very important—his exemplar here is, in particular, the Eighth (and last) Ecumenical Council, which met in Constantinople in 869/70 and which was presided over by the emperor Basil I; Nicholas quotes extensively from its proceedings. Of course Sigismund, too, was conspicuous enough at both the council of Konstanz and the council of Basel. Nicholas nevertheless concedes that the emperor no longer had the power (*potestas*, i.e. the capability combined with the right) to 'bind and restrain all' (*cum imperatoris potestas hodie non omnes sicut quondam stringat et compescat*). Consensus should therefore be achieved through consultation with 'the other princes and the kings that are in christendom' (*per principum etiam aliorum et regum, qui in Christianitate sunt, advocationem*).[131]

Despite the responsibility of the emperor for christendom as a whole, for Nicholas the empire as such was clearly, in practice, coterminous with Germany. He is not pleased with the political situation there, which he discusses with noticeably less academic detachment than he does christendom as a whole.

There no longer is any concern for the commonwealth [or: the public good] . . . the laws are all woven of spider webs, hardly capable of catching even the smallest locusts. . . . All control has ended. Rebels go unpunished. And as the empire has diminished, many powerful princes have sprung up by usurpation. . . . Oh the supreme blindness! The princes should not believe that, having enriched themselves out of the property of the empire, they will stay rich for long. For if each is only concerned to increase his property while the empire is in the process of vanishing, how can this not end in the destruction of all? Absent a greater power [*potentia*] that preserves and pacifies the empire, jealousy and this same ever-growing greed will cause wars, schisms, and divisions . . . the hierarchical order will lapse. There is no first man for all to turn to. And where there is no order there is chaos. And where there is chaos no one is safe. And thus while the nobles quarrel among themselves, leaders of the people rise up who seek the law only in their own weapons. Just as the princes devour the empire, so the leaders of the people devour the princes. . . . And people will search for the empire in Germany, and they will not find it there. And as a result others will seize our lands, and we shall be divided among ourselves, and so shall become subject to some foreign nation.[132]

[129] On the relationship between the two cf. Nicholas, *De concordantia* 3 ch. 41.

[130] Nicholas, *De concordantia* §§348–9, 355–6.

[131] Nicholas, *De concordantia* §411; cf. §482.

[132] *Periit omnis cura reipublicae . . . leges omnes de aranearum telis connexae sunt. Minutissimae vix locustae teneri in ipsis possunt. . . . Censura omnis cessavit. Non puniuntur rebelles. Et facti sunt ex tyrannica dominatione principes multi et potentes imperio decrescente. . . . O caecitas maxima. Non*

It is a little difficult to see what, concretely, Nicholas is talking about in this famous passage. There certainly was no strong central power in Germany, but there never had been, and even though among the German princes no doubt there were few paragons of patriotic self-abnegation, nevertheless the situation of the empire in the 1430s could hardly be described as lawless chaos. Feuds might occur, but there was no generalized conflict among the princes, nor any generalized popular rebellion against them. Nicholas probably has in mind the Hussites in Bohemia, much discussed at Basel. Defying the established social order, they had indeed set up a radical, broad-based regime that proved militarily invincible, and capable of raiding into the empire far beyond Bohemia itself. That Nicholas was thinking of them is also suggested by his use of the term *schismata* 'schisms', which implies a religious dispute: the Hussites rejected the universal church on theological grounds. But this movement remained confined to Bohemia; elsewhere there was neither any conspicuous contestation of the established social order nor, as yet, of the universal church. The quoted passage oscillates between the perfect tense, the present tense, and the future tense. It is evidently only partly inspired by the actual political situation: much of it is an apocalyptic extrapolation.

Nicholas' negative appraisal of the empire stands in a tradition. We saw that both Adso of Montier-en-Der in the tenth century and Engelbert of Admont in the early fourteenth century regarded the empire as largely destroyed. Many more adherents of that view could be adduced. In the 1140s, Otto of Freising, an uncle of the emperor Frederic I, remarked that the Roman empire, once supreme, had of late become almost the least respected realm of all;[133] and Jordanus of Osnabrück, very much like Nicholas, already in the third quarter of the thirteenth century warned 'the German prelates and princes [*presules et principes Germani*]' to be careful 'lest in their ambition for temporal power they claim for themselves and usurp rights and property of the empire', hastening its downfall and thereby the coming of the antichrist.[134] Like Nicholas (*o caecitas maxima!* 'oh the supreme blindness!'), Dante, in castigating what he saw as the self-seeking particularism of those of his fellow Italians who opposed the emperor-designate Henry VII, called them 'blind' (*Nec advertitis dominantem cupidinem, quia ceci estis*; *La cieca cupidigia che v'ammalia*). Henry himself took a similar view: *proterviunt inconsulte*, '*thoughtlessy* they mock us'.[135]

Nor, as we likewise saw, was this type of complaint confined to the empire. Writing roughly at the same time as Dante and Engelbert, Pierre Dubois thought that 'the vice of disrespect for the welfare and interest of the commonwealth has up to now been more

credant principes de bonis imperii divites fieri et permanere posse aliquamdiu. Curantibus enim omnibus sua augmentare, imperio ad nihil tendente, quid sequitur nisi universorum destructio? Quoniam non exsistente potentia maiori conservativa et pacativa imperii, invidia eademque semper crescente cupiditate guerras, schismata divisionesque faciet . . . desinet hierarchicus ordo. Non est primus, ad quem concurratur. Et ubi non est ordo, est confusio. Et ubi confusio, ibi nullus tutus. Et sic nobilibus inter se altercantibus ius omne in armis propriis quaerentes surgent populares. Quoniam, sicut principes imperium devorant, ita populares principes . . . Et quaeretur imperium in Germania, et non invenietur ibi. Et per consequens alieni capient loca nostra, et dividemur inter nos, et sic alteri nationi subiciemur. Nicholas, *De concordantia* §§496, 502–3, 507.

[133] *regnum Romanorum . . . ex tot alternationibus, maxime diebus nostris, ex nobilissimo factum est pene novissimum.* Otto of Freising, *Chronaca*, preface (MGH SSrG 45).

[134] Jordanus, *Tractatus super Romano imperio* 13.

[135] Dante, Letter 6.5 (1960: 393), *Paradiso* 30.139 (1983: 298); *proterviunt inconsulte*: MGH Const. 4,2 no. 915 (section 2).

strongly developed in the kingdom of France than in other parts of the world'; and in the late fifteenth century, Philippe de Commynes lamented that 'our realm [France] . . . is more oppressed and persecuted by this situation [of recurrent violent conflict among the major princes] than any other lordship that I know.'[136] Pierre and Philippe were active in the reign of what are now normally considered 'strong' kings, Philip IV and Louis XI. The common denominator of all those utterances is that they express a *longing* for a strong monarchy. This must have helped efforts by the crown to enhance its position, while at the same time it suggests that few observers in pre-Reformation christendom were impressed by the power of the crown (any crown) as it then was. It seems that 'real' monarchy was widely considered a goal whose (future) attainment would finally cure society of many much-resented ills.

There is a surprising resemblance between Nicholas' critique of the empire and Thomas Hobbes' famous theory about the need for subjection to a 'sovereign' as the only remedy for the war of all against all that, for Hobbes, in the absence of such a sovereign is inescapable. Nicholas insists on the need for a 'greater power' (*potentia maior*: power in the sense of physical power) to keep everybody else in check, a 'first man' (*primus*) to whom recourse can be had, failing which there will be chaos (*confusio*) and wars (*guerrae*) on account of the selfishness (*cupiditas*) of individuals all intent on expanding their possessions (*curantibus omnibus sua augmentare*), leading to a situation where no one was safe (*nullus tutus*). As Hobbes noted but Nicholas did not, this kind of position was incompatible with Aristotle's axiom that man was by nature a social being.[137] Thomas Aquinas and Giles of Rome also called for a strong ruler capable of coercing his subjects, but, well-versed in, and respectful of, Aristotle's political thinking, did not go so far as explicitly to make coercion the necessary precondition of an orderly social life. Nicholas, by contrast, despite great erudition displayed throughout the *De concordantia* seems only to have 'discovered' Aristotle when he wrote the introduction to Book III of the treatise, apparently the last part to be finished; and his acquaintance with Aristotle seems to have been limited to such quotations from the political writings of the *philosophus* as he found in Marsilius of Padua. Elsewhere his political thinking is far removed from Aristotle's. Thus, according to him

> The force of the law lies in coercion. Coercion is preserved by [physical] power [*potentia*]. If this is taken away, control by the law and therefore peace and justice will not last long, since we persevere in what is forbidden and the imagination of our heart is evil from our youth [an allusion to Genesis 8.21].[138]

This bleak view of human nature is again paralleled in Hobbes, as is the notion that no law can exist unless backed by coercion. Aristotle, as we saw, held the opposite view, insisting that 'the law has no power to secure compliance other than habit.'[139]

[136] Pierre Dubois, *Summaria brevis*, quoted Kämpf (1935: 72, cf. ch. 3, n. 421); Philippe de Commynes, *Mémoires* 5.18 (1978: 429).

[137] Aristotle famously postulates that man is by nature (*phýsei*) an 'animal geared towards the *pólis*', *politikón zṓi on* (*Politiká* 1253*a* 4).

[138] *Vigor legis in coerctione est, coerctionem potentia custodit et exequitur, qua sublata—quia nitimur in vetitum et sumus ab adolescentia proni ad malum—legalis censura et per consequens pax et iustitia non diu persistent.* Nicholas, *De concordantia* §552.

[139] Aristotle, *Politiká* 1269*a* 20.

Concretely, Nicholas pleads for the 'restoration' of an imperial army, mistakenly assuming that the tenth-century (east Frankish) empire, which he regarded as a model, had already possessed it. This standing army was to be financed from taxes and to have the task not just of defending but also of policing the country, in particular to combat robbers; that, Nicholas thought, would be cheaper and more efficient than the current situation, where this task fell on local power-holders.[140] Nicholas also condemns feuds as incompatible with Roman law; he wants to see them abolished in favour of compulsory jurisdiction.[141] That he devotes quite a lot of space to such proposals may be due to the fact that the emperor Sigismund had called the *Reichstag* (imperial diet) to Basel for January 1434, to sit in parallel with the council; the diet was in particular to discuss the problem of 'peace and justice', the suppression of violence and crime. Nicholas' proposals clearly go in the direction of a central power with a monopoly on legitimate violence. Nicholas wants that power controlled by an assembly representative of the country—such as, precisely, the 1434 *Reichstag*. He is, however, vague on the composition and prerogatives of that controlling assembly.[142]

In contrast with Engelbert and Dante, who ascribed to the emperor only those responsibilities that the lower-ranking power-holders or communities could not exercise themselves, for Nicholas the power of the emperor is not residual but absolute, or in any case should be. Nicholas thought that when, in 962, Otto I received the imperial crown in Rome—thus again re-establishing the western imperial dignity after the Carolingian effort to do so had failed—the Romans (in the sense of inhabitants of the city) accepted that he should have *vera suprema imperialis potestas absque diminutione et conditione*, truly supreme imperial power without limitation or condition.[143] This description of imperial power sounds very much like what Jean Bodin would later call *souveraineté*. By contrast, the notion, which Engelbert or Dante took for granted, that there should be power-holders and communities below the 'first man' and wielding power *in their own right* for Nicholas was a source of anarchy.

So we have Nicholas (and Hobbes) claiming that society and law cannot subsist in the absence of coercion and Aristotle claiming the opposite; and we have early fourteenth-century authors accepting unquestioningly the existence of intermediate power-holders whose power was not delegated by the central power when for Nicholas (and Hobbes would have agreed) this is a recipe for chaos and a threat to the social order. We are clearly dealing here with political preferences, or fashions, that were not dictated by any evolution of society itself. It is not as if what worked (more or less) for the *pólis*—law enforced almost exclusively by peer pressure and social control rather than coercion—no longer worked in fifteenth-century Germany (or seventeenth-century England), or as if the fourteenth century, with its concept of society as a hierarchy of autonomous communities topped by a concomitantly weak central power, was characterized by greater social instability than the fifteenth century, when this concept began to be rejected and 'sovereignty' (to call it by its later name) of the ruler came to be seen as desirable. Of course, calling for strong, coercive governance came more easily as few had actually experienced any such thing.

[140] Nicholas, *De concordantia* 3, ch. 39.

[141] Nicholas, *De concordantia* 3, ch. 31, 34.

[142] Cf. Sigmund (1963: 213–15); Watanabe (1963: 138–9). On the question of the constitution of the empire in Nicholas generally, see Sigmund (1963: ch. 8); Watanabe (1963: 138ff.).

[143] Nicholas, *De concordantia* §483; cf. 495, 500.

The autonomous communities envisaged by the early fourteenth-century scholastics could be treated simply as given, since their genesis could be assumed to be spontaneous. The kind of central authority envisaged by Nicholas needed to be set up. On this model, political communities came into being by virtue of a treaty between the ruler and the subjects. Remarkably, Nicholas depicts the ruler as both a larger-than-life 'father' and a 'creature' of the ruled, in a manner reminiscent of the illustration on the famous title page of the first edition of Hobbes' *Leviathan* of 1651—a giant composed of the bodies of many individuals and representing Hobbes' 'sovereign'. The relevant passage, which also recalls Hobbes in other respects, would have benefited from revision by Nicholas, for which he apparently found no time. It is so complex that Nicholas himself lost his way in it grammatically, a reflection, perhaps, of his own difficulty with the subject matter also.

Now if we recall that which we discussed earlier, that every superior power [*superioritas*] properly ordained arises from the elective unity of voluntary subjection, and that the people [*populus*] partakes of that divine seed by virtue of the equal birth and the equal natural rights shared by all men, so that every [legal] power [*potestas*], which, like man himself, takes its origin from god, is considered divine if through their shared consent it arises from the subjects, so that the person established in this fashion, and in exercising his princely office as it were carrying in himself the will of all, should be called a public and shared person and the father of the individuals, governing everything with rightful, rule-bound, properly ordained might [*potentia*] and without pomp or arrogance, and knowing himself to be the collective creature of all his subjects, he is the father of the individuals.[144]

Despite the convoluted phrasing, the basic theses are clear: the subjects, whose natural equality is emphasized, create the ruler by means of their voluntary subjection to him. So on the one hand that ruler is responsible to them, but on the other all power or might (*potentia*) is his, governing 'everything' (*cuncta gubernans*); and the whole arrangement is regarded as enjoying 'divine' legitimation. The ruler exercises his function less as a human being than as an abstract 'public' person, rather like Hobbes' 'Artificial Man', and in line with Hobbes' assertion that 'every Subject is Author of every act the Soveraign doth.'[145]

4.2.5.2 *Enea Silvio Piccolomini, Frederic III of Habsburg, and Maximilian of Habsburg*

When Nicholas presented his treatise to the Basel council, the participants included one Enea Silvio Piccolomini (1405–64). Elected to the papacy in 1458, he was later to

[144] *Ecce si ea, quae superius habentur, ad mentem revoces, quomodo omnis superioritas ordinata ex electiva concordantia spontaneae subiectionis exoritur, et quod populo illud divinum seminarium per communem omnium hominum aequalem nativitatem et aequalia naturalia iura inest, ut omnis potestas, quae principaliter a deo est sicut et ipse homo, tunc divina censeatur, quando per concordantiam communem a subiectis exoritur, ut sic constitutus, quasi in se omnium voluntatem gestans in principando, publica et communis persona ac pater singulorum vocetur in recta regulari ordinata potentia cuncta gubernans absque fastu superbiae, dum se quasi omnium collective subiectorum sibi creaturam cognoscit, singulorum pater exsistat.* Nicholas, *De concordantia* §331.

[145] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Introduction (1985: 81); 21 (1985: 265). On Nicholas' political theory anticipating the 'modern state' cf. Pernthaler (1970).

make Nicholas a member of the curia and his deputy when he was not in Rome.[146] He evidently read *De concordantia*, since bits and pieces of that treatise reappear (without acknowledgement) in his own treatise *De ortu et auctoritate imperii Romani* 'On the origin and authority of the Roman empire'. This treatise has the form of a long letter, dated Vienna, 1 March 1446, to the then king of Romans, Frederic III, a Habsburg whose secretary Enea Silvio was at the time.[147] Further borrowings, likewise unacknowledged, come from Engelbert and Dante. In the latter instance it is, however, possible that Enea Silvio lifted the relevant material not direct from the *Monarchia* of Dante, but from the eponymous treatise of his own teacher, the legal scholar Antonio Roselli, who had himself appropriated much of the work of his predecessor without ever mentioning his name.[148]

Enea Silvio evidently drew the inspiration for his title from Engelbert, whom indeed he partly follows on the 'origin' (*ortus*) of the early kingdoms in general and then of the *monarchia* in the sense of lordship over the whole world; however, there are also telling departures. According to Enea Silvio, after their expulsion from the Garden of Eden men at first lived as scattered individuals, but then discovered the advantages of communal life. To resolve disputes they found it necessary to subject themselves to a common arbitrator, who later received the title king. Led by kings, the original 'nations and peoples' (*gentes nationesque*) were not interested in expanding their territory beyond their own homeland (*intra suam cuique patriam regna finiebantur*).[149] But soon quarrels erupted between the kings over questions of territory and jurisdiction. Since they did not recognize each other's authority, those quarrels could only be settled by the sword. This led to the creation of 'what the Greeks call *monarchia*, and we ourselves [*nostri*] call *imperium*'—for this was the only way to ensure a general peace (*Nec enim aliter pax universalis haberi poterat*).[150]

First there was the empire (*imperium*) of the Assyrians under Nínos, later ruled by the Medes and Persians, the empire (Enea Silvio refers to it as a *principatus*) of the Greeks under Alexander, and the empire (*dominium*) of the Carthaginians. Each is introduced with *hinc* 'thence, therefore', suggesting that each is seen as a separate instantiation of the basic phenomenon rather than as part of a pre-ordained succession as in the traditional interpretation of the prophesy of Daniel—which in any case knew of no empire of the Carthaginians. That Enea Silvio wanted to stay clear of Daniel here is also indicated by the fact that he does not employ the word *imperium* throughout but varies his terminology. Unlike Engelbert, Enea Silvio does not regard the phenomenon of empire as, at least in origin, the product of (reprehensible) passion rather than reason, instead presenting it as divinely willed and as a product of reason because empire was the precondition of general peace.

Whereas Engelbert and Dante felt compelled to prove the legitimacy of Roman rule against the accusation that the Roman conquests were unjust, Enea Silvio—and, for

[146] On the relationship between Nicholas and Enea, see Kisch (1970).

[147] Enea Silvio Piccolomini (1939); an English trans. (not used here) is in Izbicki and Nederman (2000). On the borrowings from the *De concordantia*, see the editor's introduction to the 1939 edn. p. 39, and the critical apparatus. On this treatise, see also Esch (1989) and Schmidinger (1978).

[148] The *Monarchia* of Antonio Roselli (Antonius de Rosellis), mostly written in 1433 or 1434 but reworked in the early 1440s (Cheneval 1995: 295–6), is in Melchior Goldast (ed.), *Monarchia S. Romani Imperii* (Hanau 1611), vol. 1, pp. 252–556. I have not read this massive work, relying on Cheneval 1995 for information on its content.

[149] Enea Silvio (1939: 56).

[150] Enea Silvio (1939: 58).

that matter, Nicholas—completely ignored that whole theme. Ubiquitous in the early fourteenth century, in their day this particular debate had clearly gone out of fashion. Nor did Enea Silvio have any use for Engelbert's eschatologically motivated fatalism, based in part on the prophesy of Daniel and according to which the decline of the empire would ineluctably continue until the coming of the antichrist. Engelbert's treatise was about 'the origin and [future] *end* of the Roman empire': even though the translation 'the origin and *purpose* of the Roman empire' is likewise possible, the former sense is unavoidably present, too. By contrast, Enea Silvio, striking a less ambiguous and more positive note, called his own treatise 'On the origin *and authority* of the Roman empire'.

Since the Assyrians, Medes, Persians, etc. 'never brought the entire world under their control [*nunquam sibi totum orbem subjecissent*] and therefore were unable to establish a general peace, it pleased nature, who nourishes the human race, or god as lord and leader [*rector*] of nature, to bring the Roman empire into being'.[151] The legitimacy of the Roman empire is derived by Enea Silvio from the usual staple of arguments that we encountered before. Thus, there is the indispensable observation that Christ was born in the reign of Augustus, as well as a reference to the reply given by Jesus to Pontius Pilate 'Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above' (John 19.11). This, as we saw, is also adduced by Dante (*Monarchia* 2.11), though Enea Silvio may likewise have found it in Jordanus of Osnabrück. Acquaintance with that latter author is suggested by the 'spin' that Enea Silvio puts on the notion that the Roman empire would not end until the coming of the antichrist—interpreting it, like Jordanus, as a special honour bestowed by god on the Roman empire.[152]

What most sharply distinguishes Enea Silvio from both Engelbert and Dante is his emphasis on the fullness of the imperial power, a subject on which he seems to be following in the footsteps of Antonio Roselli. As in the case of the original realms discussed at the beginning of the treatise, so, too, the universal *monarchia* should be ruled by a single person, which according to Enea Silvio is a dictate of 'natural reason'. But who could this single person be other than the king of Romans, long known to have been in possession of that office (*quem diu constat in possessione ejus fuisse*)—presumably an allusion to the Roman law concept of *usucapio*, according to which a possession must be considered lawful if sufficient time passes without its being contested effectively.[153] Enea Silvio concedes that there were people unwilling to submit to the empire, yet points out that even so no one had yet thought of calling someone other than the king of Romans lord of the world (*mundi dominus*). This incidentally establishes an implicit equivalence between the 'king of Romans' (as the addressee of the treatise, Frederic III, as yet was when it was written) and the 'emperor of the Romans' (as Frederic became by virtue of his imperial coronation in 1452). Enea Silvio also follows the example of Engelbert in simply ignoring the question of whether the pope had some kind of suzerainty over the emperor, thus implicitly denying that he did. (Nicholas, for his part, expressly states that the ruler of the empire had the same rights whether he had received the imperial coronation or

[151] Enea Silvio (1939: 58).

[152] Cf. Jordanus, *Tractatus super Romano imperio* 8. Nicholas, too, cites John 19.11 (*De concordantia* §289), but, invoking Augustine, interprets the passage as meaning that the secular power in general was god-given. According to the editor of Nicholas' treatise the reference to Augustine is to his commentary on the gospel of John.

[153] Enea Silvio (1939: 69–70); cf. Codex Iustinianus 7.39.8.1.

not, and thought that the point of having the pope bestow the imperial title proper was merely to encourage the incumbent to seek a close relationship with the Holy See.)[154]

In contrast with Engelbert, but in line with the trend to do away with traditional limitations on the power of the supreme ruler, Enea Silvio rejects the notion that anyone could be exempted from the suzerainty of the empire by some privilege. This is precisely because the ruler of the empire is absolute, all-powerful: according to Enea Silvio, no more than god himself could the emperor create someone who was his equal. Moreover, this would be in contradiction with the natural purpose of the empire, to preserve peace (*pacem tenere*) and to apply justice (*justitiam distribuere*). A plurality of supreme powers (*multitudo summarum potestatum*) could not do that.[155] The existence of other princes is a given even for Enea Silvio, but he insists that by rights the emperor exercises a suzerainty over them that is not merely nominal.

> We do not . . . contest that kings and other princes have great power [*potestas*], but we say that they are under the empire [*eos esse sub imperium dicimus*], and that it is incumbent on the Roman prince to take them to task if they become tyrants. We affirm that all quarrels of the kings must be submitted to the emperor [*cesar*] and that for the sake of the common welfare [*salus communis*] all are obliged to defer to the emperor [*imperator*], to assist him militarily when called on to do so, to contribute expenses, to send troops, to permit their passage, to furnish supplies, and not to evade anything that the imperial majesty [*cesarea majestas*] has enjoined, granting to their lord the emperor [*imperator*] the same obedience that they demand of their own subjects.[156]

For Enea Silvio, there was no need for obedience to be counterbalanced by representation as in Nicholas. Enea Silvio moreover rejects the principle of the 'feudal' order empowering subjects or vassals to resist their lord if in their view he acted unjustly. Such unjust behaviour by the lord was the will of god and often a punishment for the sins of the subjects. The emperor, and he alone, could make laws binding on everyone, and he alone could interpret or repeal them. He himself was not bound by laws, *legibus solutus*. He should normally respect them, but could deviate from them if equity suggested it.[157] For Enea Silvio, there could be no appeal against a decision of the emperor, just as according to a legal principle of the church (challenged, it is true, by the conciliar movement) the pope could be judged by no one.[158]

Like Nicholas, Enea Silvio sees the imperial office as the secular equivalent of the papal office: 'just as in spiritual matters the individual . . . bishops are subject to the Roman pontiff, so, too, is it clear that secular persons of whatever kind are subject to the Roman prince [*sicut in spiritualibus Romano pontifici singuli . . . prelati subjecti sunt . . . sic et Romano principi temporales quoslibet liquet esse subjectos*]'.[159] (Curiously this postulates authority of the pope only over the leaders of the church hierarchy, whereas the emperor is given authority over all laymen.) As Antonio Roselli[160] and Nicholas[161]

[154] Nicholas, *De concordantia* §336.
[155] Enea Silvio (1939: 70–2).
[156] Enea Silvio (1939: 76).
[157] Enea Silvio (1939: 88) (the phrase *princeps legibus solutus* quotes the *Corpus iuris*, Digest 1.3.31).
[158] *papa a nemine iudicatur*; on this principle see e.g. Canning (1996: 32, 120).
[159] Enea Silvio (1939: 68).
[160] Cheneval (1995: 304).
[161] Nicholas, *De concordantia* §292.

had done before him, Enea Silvio applies the doctrine of the church as the mystic body of Christ (*corpus mysticum*) to the 'commonwealth' or *res publica*: this, too, is treated as a mystic body (or perhaps rather: the same mystic body as the church), with the emperor as its head (*princeps, qui caput est mystici rei publice corporis*).[162] As was the case with early-fourteenth-century writers like Engelbert or Pierre Dubois, the 'commonwealth' *tout court* is still christendom, clearly still the natural interpretation since Enea Silvio saw no need to define what he meant.

Antonio Roselli had adapted arguments developed by Dante to assert the primacy of the emperor to defend the primacy of the pope against the challenge of conciliarism. Enea Silvio re-adapts those arguments to assert the primacy of the emperor once more.[163] This is another instance of how concepts of rule that in the post-Reformation period became ingredients of the general theory of princely rule now commonly called 'absolutism' were shaped in the pre-Reformation period in the debate on the respective rights, and mutual relationship, of the emperor and the pope, as well as on their role with regard to christendom generally. With regard to christendom as a whole, the emperor as presented in the political thinking of Nicholas and Enea Silvio remained a theoretical construct. Yet the two authors are instructive in that they illustrate how ideas of rulership and political organization had changed since the time of Engelbert and Dante (especially as Enea Silvio at least was actually conversant with the thinking of those two). The ruler as conceived by Nicholas and Enea Silvio is the source of all power rather than merely wielding what power could not be wielded at a lower level of political organization, more particularly the lower *communitates* (household, village, city, kingdom) of Engelbert and Dante. Thomas Aquinas and Giles of Rome (cited approvingly by Nicholas)[164] had already stressed the power and importance of the king, but while they completely ignore any lesser lords than the king, in their thinking the self-organizing *communitates* are likewise prominent. By contrast, Nicholas and Enea Silvio do away with the *communitates*, which simply drop out. The supreme ruler alone now runs the show, though (in Nicholas) he faces some kind of representative assembly of the subjects. Of course, in the nature of a theory of empire rather than of kingship neither Nicholas nor Enea Silvio could ignore that the king of Romans was not the only king in christendom. But Nicholas, having established a rather vague superordination of the emperor over every other ruler in christendom, whether or not they were subject to the empire, in matters regarding the common faith, then concentrates on German politics, which he had clearly more at heart; Enea Silvio prefers the intrinsic logic of his theory over contemporary political reality in simply denying that anybody at all could be not subject to the empire. In a similar spirit, as pope he issued a stinging condemnation of conciliarism (papal bull *Execrabilis*, 1460).

John Ruggie has observed that the '[t]he concept of sovereignty . . . was . . . the doctrinal counterpart of the application of single-point perspectival forms [in the figurative arts] to the spatial organization of politics'[165] —precisely around the time when Enea Silvio composed his treatise. His political thinking has the clarity and systematic consistency of the depictions of ideal, classical-inspired architecture popular among Renaissance artists. As tended to be the case with those ideal designs, too, it found at best an imperfect echo

[162] Enea Silvio (1939: 82).
[163] Cheneval (1995: 303–5).
[164] Nicholas, *De concordantia* §378.
[165] Ruggie (1993: 159).

in projects carried out in the 'real world'. On the other hand, of course there *is* a marked resemblance between architectural projects of that period that were actually carried out and those ideal designs—they share the same, novel style, superseding the Gothic style, which by the sixteenth century gave way to it everywhere. Interestingly, late in his life Enea Silvio himself ventured into town planning: having become pope he renamed his Tuscan birthplace, the village of Corsignano, Pienza (i.e. Pius-Town, after the name he took as pope, Pius II), elevated it to an episcopal see, and started rebuilding it as an ideal Renaissance town, with various palaces clustered around, and oriented towards, the new cathedral at the centre.

Frederic III never became the all-powerful emperor envisaged by Enea Silvio. On the throne for over half a century, for much of his reign he was contested from within his own dynasty and had a hard time even hanging on to his hereditary lands, to say nothing of exercising a powerful influence as emperor. The great question of his reign was the future of the Burgundian dominions. We saw that king Charles V of France managed to secure the hand of the daughter and only heir of the last count of Flanders for his brother, whom he created duke of Burgundy. In this way, two of the great principalities forming part of the French kingdom, Flanders and Burgundy, were united under a member of the French royal house—a solution preferable by far, for king Charles, to the prospect of a marriage between the Burgundian heiress and a son of Edward III of England, which would have resulted in two of the great French principalities, Flanders and Aquitaine, being held by the English royal house. But the Burgundian branch of the Valois dynasty thus created subsequently embarked on a dynamic career of its own, collecting more and more dominions stretching from Holland down to Burgundy proper, even though they were not all contiguous. (This accretion of dominions occurred mainly through inheritance and purchase. Moreover, Burgundian support of the English claim to the French crown was paid for with additional fiefs granted by the English crown, possession of which was then confirmed in return for switching support back to the French king.) Sandwiched between France and Germany, all those dominions were either French or German fiefs, the duke of Burgundy theoretically remaining a vassal for all the lands that he ruled and lacking any dominions held in his own right—but he behaved like a king, his court easily rivalling any royal court of the period in terms of wealth and refinement.

However, like the count of Flanders a century earlier, the last duke, Charles 'the Bold' (1433–77, in power since 1454), only had a female heir, Mary, ardently sought in marriage by both the French crown and the house of Habsburg as a way to recover the fiefs belonging to their respective kingdoms—while, if possible, of course hanging on to the rest as well. When Charles was killed in the battle of Nancy in 1477, Louis XI of France hastened to occupy those Burgundian fiefs that the duke had held from the French crown. Shocked at this, the Burgundian court at last opted for Frederic, whose son Maximilian got to marry the orphaned Burgundian heiress. Their son, heir to the combined Habsburg and Burgundian hereditary lands despite the loss of some Burgundian fiefs to the French crown, would later marry the heiress of the Spanish realms (and the Spanish overseas colonies), providing their grandson, the emperor Charles V, with dominions ranging from the Philippines to the Americas, and in which famously the sun never set. It should be noted that—as had also been the case, on a smaller scale, with the Burgundian lands themselves—this spectacular expansion of the Habsburg dominions was not achieved by conquest. Though unusual in its dimensions, the phenomenon as such is entirely typical

of the *ancien régime*, where acquisitions by inheritance tended throughout to be vastly more extensive than acquisitions by conquest.

Being nominal lord of a vast array of dominions did not mean that the ruler was necessarily very powerful in those lands; moreover, his position would be different in each of his separate dominions. Yet in a highly status-conscious culture, possession of many dominions was prestigious, a source of pride and envy. More than his father Frederic, whom he succeeded as king of Romans in 1493, Maximilian was not only imbued with the magnificence of his position, but, in the manner that became typical of princes in the post-Reformation *ancien régime*, was keen on outward expression of this magnificence.

In 1508, Maximilian commissioned his funeral monument, employing the best available artists. Perhaps the largest and most magnificent monument of any prince in the history of christendom, at his death in 1519 it was still unfinished; moreover, it turned out that even so the floor of the church of Saint George at Wiener Neustadt, where Maximilian is buried, would not support the weight of its many bronze statues because of the crypt underneath. The monument was to have comprised a funeral procession of forty more than life-sized ancestors and relatives of the deceased, of which only twenty-eight were carried out; as were thirty-four busts of pre- and early christian Roman rulers and twenty-three statues of saints with whom the house of Habsburg was considered to have a special affinity. (In the 1570s, the emperor Ferdinand I at last had the unfinished monument installed in the newly-built *Hofkirche* or palace church at Innsbruck.) Only a decade and a half separate the planning of this gigantic Renaissance monument, which has nothing Gothic at all, from the magnificently carved, but perfectly conventional and determinedly Gothic marble tomb of Frederic III in Vienna cathedral—which in comparison looks humble indeed; but Frederic, aged 77 at his death in 1493, was the product of an earlier age.

In Germany, Maximilian, because of his love of chivalry, is popularly known as 'the last knight'. But this is a romantic misconception (chivalrous ritual, such as tournaments, remained popular throughout the sixteenth century). Rather than being a remnant of a dying age, he really epitomizes the prince of the future, much more imbued with his own importance than was typical of pre-Reformation Latin christendom. This change took place despite the fact that Maximilian was hardly a more powerful figure, within the empire or within Europe, than his predecessors. Within the empire, he shared power with the estates of the empire, that is the greater princes and the free cities. Within christendom at large, he was the senior of a dynasty whose extensive possessions spread over different parts of Europe and which had family ties with practically everybody who was anybody in christendom—thus, as just one aspect of this, daughters or granddaughters of Maximilian himself were, at one time or another, married to the king of France, the king of Portugal, the next king of Portugal, the king of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, the king of Bohemia and Hungary, and the duke of Savoy. But while this made Maximilian a key figure with a great deal of influence, it did not mean that he could lay down the law to anybody—not within the dynasty, nor within the empire or even simply the Habsburg hereditary lands, nor within christendom at large.

It was in the same year 1508 that Maximilian unilaterally assumed the imperial title. In a proclamation informing the estates of the Holy Roman Empire of this step, he explains, with apparent humility, that he was unable to obtain the imperial coronation

from the pope, 'owing to our small power and great opposition, the like of which no Roman king has ever encountered'. Appealing to German national sentiment, he protests that the behaviour of the Holy See was unfair and that, without prejudice to any papal prerogatives and in the hope that the coronation would yet take place, he felt compelled to adopt the imperial title 'for the sake not just of our own honour but rather for the sake of confirming and preserving the Roman imperial dignity, in honour of us all and of the German nation [*nicht allein um Unserer Ehre willen, sondern mehr zur Bestätigung und Erhaltung des Römischen Kayserthums, Uns allen und Teutscher Nation zu Ehren*]'.[166]

Less than a decade before Martin Luther set in motion the movement that was to end the unity of Latin christendom and the authority of the pope over all of it, this document already makes clear that a new age had begun. Two hundred years earlier, in the reign of Henry VII, assuming the imperial title without the requisite ecclesiastical ceremony in Rome was utterly unthinkable. That title in itself was considered of such moment that his adversaries tried to block the ceremony by force of arms, occupying Saint Peter's cathedral. Having obtained the coronation anyway, Henry in his circular informed all christendom of that fact, employing, of course, the common language of christendom, Latin, and at length invoking universal christian politico-religious doctrine. In 1508, we find his successor Maximilian deciding that if he cannot have the ceremony, that, with due respect to the Holy See, was no reason not to adopt the imperial title—for which his position as king of Romans made him the automatic and sole candidate. No doubt the courts of christendom were also informed of this step. But the place of the 1312 circular is here taken by a communication internal to the Holy Roman Empire, employing the German language, and appealing to German patriotic pride. In striking contrast to the 1312 circular, in the 1508 proclamation christian doctrine plays no role at all.

This is not to say that the traditional ideology of the empire with its universalist and strongly religious orientation was abandoned by Maximilian—it is still found in his reign, and under his successors well into the seventeenth century. But the emphasis on this kind of discourse decreased steadily. Conversely, the overt invocation of German national sentiment not only marks another break with the past—if I am not mistaken, Maximilian was the first emperor to resort to it—but it caught on massively; one is tempted to say, with a vengeance. By the mid-sixteenth century, the political discourse of the Holy Roman Empire, including, but far from limited to, official utterances by the crown,[167] became replete with references to the 'beloved fatherland of German nation' (equated with the empire), with which it remained saturated throughout the *ancien régime*. One more emperor, Charles V, was crowned by the pope, in 1530; after that, all took the imperial title from the moment of their accession as sole rulers (having mostly been elected and crowned as king of Romans in the lifetime of their predecessors).

4.2.6 The crown as an imagined central power

The crown, mystically enhanced after the turn of the millennium, served as focal point for concepts of legitimate rule. In some instances, this helped it to strengthen its political power; in every case it enabled the crown to constitute political community, by virtue of uniting people in their loyalty to it. I contend that this creation of a political community

[166] Zeumer (1913: no. 178).

[167] See e.g. the Religious Peace of Passau as promulgated by Ferdinand I in 1555 (Zeumer 1913: no. 189).

centred on the crown was quite independent of the greater or lesser degree to which the crown wielded actual, let alone coercive, power.

The fanciful depictions of a powerful crown by Thomas Aquinas and Giles of Rome suggest that in the political thinking of the period simple kingdoms were treated no differently from the empire: treated, that is, as political fiction. It would be an error to assume that the empire alone existed only in theory, as wishful thinking, or that it had once been powerful and thus 'real' but later declined because its central power weakened (a notion already held by Nicholas of Kues). In reality, the empire, or, within it, the Roman king/emperor, had never been especially powerful—but the same was true of simple kingdoms as well. Here, too, the crown had to fill, grow into, a political space defined by political theory, rather than political theory taking its cues from really existing kingdoms. The difference between the empire and the other kingdoms was not that the empire lacked power, but that it lacked the popular acceptance and support of the crown enabling it to fill its conceptual space.

Take taxation: in origin, it was not based on coercion. Philippe de Commynes, at the end of the fifteenth century, denies that the king of France or any other lord could tax people without their consent. He devotes some discussion to this question, which was a subject of controversy: some in the royal entourage, denounced by Philippe, thought that the French crown needed no consent for taxation. Indeed, by the seventeenth century this principle had essentially won the day: but if this was so, and if the notion could be put forward already in the fifteenth century, ultimately it was not because the crown was in a position to compel people to pay but because they accepted that they should do so. Philippe notes with surprise that decades of ever more intense exploitation by the king had not diminished the eagerness of the subjects to provide him with fresh funds. According to Philippe, under Charles VII (reigns 1430–61) annual taxes had never amounted to more than 1.8 million *francs*, whereas under Louis XI (reigns 1461–83) the figure had been around three million and by the time of his death had risen to 4.7 million, 'without the artillery and other similar things' (I am not sure what Philippe means by this qualification). Louis was succeeded by a 13-year old, at whose accession his advisers resolved to convene the estates (representatives) of the entire kingdom at Tours—this was the first time that this type of assembly took the name estates-general (it remained a rarity in France, where it was much more common for the estates to meet on a regional basis). The decision was taken against warnings that such an assembly was dangerous as well as beneath the dignity of the crown. However, the estates turned out to be supportive, and this is adduced by Philippe as an argument against those opposed to any such consultation with the subjects.

Despite the kingdom being so trodden under and oppressed in many ways, was there any hostility among the people against their ruler? Did princes [the great lords of the realm] and subjects take up arms against their young king? . . . Did they wish to strip him of his authority . . . ? . . . No . . . all came before him, the princes and the lords as well as the men from the towns . . . to swear allegiance and render homage . . . some demands and remonstrances were put forward in the presence of the king and his council, in great humility for the good of the kingdom, and always leaving everything to the pleasure of the king and his council. And they granted him all that they were asked to . . . without raising any objection; and the sum that was asked for was two million five hundred thousand *francs* . . . , and the said estates begged that after two years they should be convened anew; and that if the king lacked money they would supply whatever sum he

wanted; and that if he faced wars, or anyone who wanted to harm him, they would put forward their persons and possessions, and not withhold anything from him that he might need.[168]

To operationalize the concept of a French kingdom with a powerful crown it was necessary (and, indeed, not far short of sufficient) for a majority of people within that kingdom to adhere to that concept. This they did, spontaneously and even—to the astonishment of Philippe de Commynes—faced with an unpopular, demanding ruler like Louis XI. It is true that demands by the crown did not always meet with the kind of favourable reception described by Philippe, far from it. But the general principle that the crown was entitled to financial contributions from its subjects was widely accepted. By contrast, to operationalize the concept of the empire in the sense of making its head the supreme secular ruler of christendom it was *not* enough for people in Germany and perhaps northern Italy to adhere to it. People in the rest of christendom would have had to do so as well. They did not: the notion of, say, the emperor Frederic III, into whose reign the 1488 meeting of the French estates-general fell, requesting representatives of all christendom to grant him funds seems surreal. It is not that people actively rejected the empire, but neither would they put themselves out for it as they did for their 'local' crown. Moreover, to some extent, a political community of Latin christendom united under a single ruler already existed: that ruler was the pope (and he did tax much of christendom in the shape notably of Saint Peter's penny). As a focus of loyalty, in christendom he competed with, and outshone, the emperor, whereas within the various realms the crown had no such competition. It is the fact that the acquisition of real power by the crown presupposed the prior constitution of a political community focused on that crown which explains why the emperor never gained any power over lands outside those of which he was also king.

Ironically, he was always, essentially, 'emperor in his own realm'. On the other hand, that was what every other king of the post-Reformation *ancien régime* wanted to be, too—never mind that their constitutional position varied greatly from one realm to the next or indeed, within the same realm, from one period to the next; or that, again ironically, the position of the emperor in his German realm was actually less powerful than that of some of his royal colleagues elsewhere. As a result, the kind of ideas on 'imperial' rulership developed by Nicholas of Kues and Enea Silvio Piccolomini were to have a great future.

4.3 Crown and 'state' in the *ancien régime*

4.3.1 The nature of the period, and what to call it

Contrary to the rule that I have endeavoured to adhere to elsewhere, the term *ancien régime* is, of course, by its nature alien to that period itself. But I have been unable to think of a better one to designate pre-industrial Europe—meaning in particular, though not exclusively, pre-industrial but post-Reformation Europe. Not exclusively, because although the Reformation is an important historical marker, it marks a break only in some respects while in many other important respects there was continuity. Conventional historiography speaks of the 'middle ages' and the '(early) modern period'

[168] Philippe de Commynes, *Mémoires* 5.19 (1978: 423–4).

in a way that suggests that a new era began around 1500. It did, but there was less of a new era, less of a break with the old era than there was around 1800. The discontinuity between fifteenth-century Europe and sixteenth-century Europe, after the Reformation and the discovery of America, is much smaller than between eighteenth-century Europe and nineteenth-century Europe, after the French Revolution and the onset of industrialization. Among the aspects of the fundamental change occurring at this time, not the least important is that nineteenth-century Europe had the 'state' essentially as we know it, and eighteenth-century Europe did not. Around 1800, within a few decades the social and political organization of the whole of Europe underwent massive, radical change that indeed deserves the epithet revolutionary; this did not happen around 1500. Thus, if I am not totally dissatisfied with the expression *ancien régime*, it is because at least it conveys the basic point that socially, politically, and economically things were substantially different, until the late eighteenth century, from what came later and what, because to us it seems so natural, we are constantly tempted to regard as timeless and to project back in time.

4.3.2 The heightened profile of princely governance in post-Reformation Europe

Beginning in the fifteenth century, throughout Europe the role, or at least the profile, of princes increased. It really does appear that, as John Ruggie has surmised, the major, fundamental change went on in people's heads—Ruggie speaks of a 'broad transformation in the prevailing social episteme'—and that it occurred quite fast, within a generation or two.[169]

According to Ruggie, the main agent of change was 'social empowerment', a new conception of politics creating acceptance for a centralization of power in the hands of the prince in much the same way as painters adopted single-point perspective—in response neither to any functional need, nor to coercion, nor to any 'technology' not available earlier. Nevertheless, certain trends in the economic and military evolution of European civilization no doubt promoted the increasing focus on centralized princely governance and are worth recalling, briefly and without any claim to being exhaustive. Cause and effect are often hard to distinguish here. In most instances, what we have is probably best described as a cumulative, self-reinforcing process, where the 'transformation of the prevailing social episteme', of the prevailing way of looking at the social world, encouraged certain types of material change that in its turn consolidated a new climate of thought. The new thinking itself, on the other hand, remained permeated with ideas on the role of power-holders imprinted on western civilization by christianity.

4.3.2.1 *Economic and military factors*

In the economic sphere, the overall expansion characterizing the period after the turn of the millennium continued and probably intensified in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, helped by the fact that Europe increasingly dominated the rest of the world: new crops, raw materials, trade goods, and markets kept stimulating trade and thus monetization. In the conditions described earlier, more trade also meant more credit, an expansion of the financial system of Europe accompanied by its increasing

[169] Ruggie (1993: esp. 160–1).

sophistication. This general expansion meant that more and more wealth was up for distribution within Europe.

In the latter part of the *ancien régime*, many of the proud self-governing towns of Latin christendom went into decline, not least economically. One reason for this was the tendency to move artisanal production to the countryside, where it was not controlled by guilds: this meant that there were no restrictions on the nature or quantity of what could be produced, or by whom. Since workers did not have to be approved by the guilds, and women and children were not barred, either, the workforce was greater and the cost of labour, less. Entrepreneurs mostly still resident in the towns supplied the raw materials and collected and marketed the output, with production itself put out to scattered rural households.[170] This was true for example of the textile industry—woollen and linen cloth—of northern France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Wealthy citizens of towns like Beauvais, such as Gabriel Motte, whom we encountered earlier, distributed raw materials partly imported from far away (such as fine Spanish wool) to villagers and then sold the finished cloth throughout Europe and even in the Americas.[171] On the plateau separating the towns of Amiens, Aumale, and Beauvais, many more looms could be found than ploughs.[172] This situation—full-time farmers being outnumbered in the countryside by artisanal workers—was likewise found throughout much of the rest of late *ancien régime* Europe.

Even the greatest cities of the pre-Reformation period had usually been dominated by merchants. After the Reformation, such cities were increasingly rivalled by princely residences. Some princely residences, like Paris, London, or Naples, had been great cities before, but they were now joined by many that before the Reformation had been of little significance. Thus, when, in the fifteenth century, the Hohenzollern family was enfeoffed with the electorate of Brandenburg, all of whose towns were quite modest, they chose to establish their main residence at Berlin—then a settlement of perhaps some 6,000 people, which actually put it among the large towns of the electorate. By 1730, the population of Berlin had risen to about 72,000, approaching 100,000 in 1760.[173] This was a lot less than Paris, London, or Vienna had at that time. But since nothing in its geographical position in the middle of a thinly settled land of poor soils and few other natural resources predestined Berlin ever to reach this size, it exemplifies the effect of serving as a princely residence particularly well.

We have already discussed the crucial role played by monetization as an enabling factor for centralizing power. As a result, from the late pre-Reformation period onwards political power was increasingly paralleled by financial power. Armies made up of vassals gave way to armies made up of mercenaries, and successful warfare increasingly demanded manpower, weaponry, and infrastructure (e.g. fortresses) on a scale putting it beyond the means of minor lords. The evolution of fortifications well exemplifies the phenomenon. The vertical walls of pre-Reformation castles and towns were easy to breach with heavy artillery. To make them reasonably difficult to overcome, a new type of fortifications was necessary, the so-called *trace italienne* first encountered in fifteenth-century Italy: relatively low, sloping walls reinforced with earthworks, broken up by complicated,

[170] Kriedte (1984: esp. 162–5).
[171] Goubert (1977: 146–60).
[172] Goubert (1977: 150).
[173] Vogel (1993: 55, 96).

many-angled bastions; a wide glacis, secured by a wide ditch or moat and ancillary fortifications beyond it, served to prevent attackers from getting close. Fortifications of this type were difficult, or at least uneconomical, to execute on a small scale and typically enclosed whole towns; where they were built on a green field site, such as some of the fortresses constructed by Vauban to secure the frontiers of France under Louis XIV, this often actually amounted to the foundation of new towns. So huge were fortifications of this new type that they often took up more space than they protected: for example, the relation in terms of area between the fortifications of eighteenth-century Mainz and the settlement at their centre was 4:3. It has been estimated that the cost of fortifications rose by a factor of thirty in the course of the seventeenth century.[174]

Armies (and to a lesser extent, navies) expanded, too.

> The sixteenth century, at least from the 1530s onwards, had seen an unprecedented growth in the size of armies; and this was to continue throughout the century which followed. The Spanish army, perhaps a mere 20,000 in the 1470s when Spain's rise to the military leadership of Europe was about to begin, had reached 300,000 in the late 1630s . . . France, which was maintaining an army of about 50,000 in the 1550s, had one three times as large in the 1630s.[175]

Building and maintaining armies, navies, and fortresses was expensive in itself, and using them was more expensive still. Again the new fortifications were most responsible for this.

> A long siege ate up money, materials and often men in a way that even the greatest battle hardly ever did. . . . A great siege was, with the possible exception of the building of a great canal, the biggest engineering operation known to the age [the 17th and 18th centuries]. . . . [It] could therefore strain the resources of the greatest states so seriously as to make it impossible to accomplish anything more in an entire campaigning season.[176]

The huge fortresses, huge armies, and navies of the late *ancien régime* were only possible because those who commissioned them could take out loans to finance them—loans secured against their revenue for example from taxes. As we saw, such loans were impossible in the pre-christian and early christian period; and in the late *ancien régime* they were not available to minor lords.[177]

4.3.2.2 *Cultural preconditions: The christian ethos of obedience and obligation*

Jean Bodin and Thomas Hobbes explicitly derive the justification of strong ('sovereign') centralized rule, and of the (near-)unconditional obedience of the 'subjects' from the obligation of 'sovereign' princes to provide security for those subjects: for them, the two are inseparable. Yet in earlier phases of western civilization this type of justification of rule—on the basis of mutual obligation—was absent. Traditional Greek and Roman political culture was predicated on the concept of citizens, free men only beholden to

[174] Kemp (1997: 239–40).
[175] Anderson (1998: 17).
[176] Anderson (1998: 40, 42).
[177] On the very controversial issue of the impact of trends in military technology on political structures—often referred to as a 'military revolution', though there is little consensus on what exactly this 'revolution' consisted in—see esp. Black (1991); Eltis (1998); Parker (1996); Rogers (1995).

their peers. Only tyrants had subjects, but they were by definition illegitimate. Free men could not be subjects, even if they were no citizens, like the metics of Athens. Only slaves were unfree, but this was essentially a category of private law not public law. With the category of subjects essentially absent from political thinking, so was the notion of duties of subjects towards their ruler. Thus, in the post-Persian Greek world, *pólis* citizenries on the one hand and kings on the other are always assuring each other of their mutual good will (*eúnoia*), but on neither side is there any notion of obligation to the other side.[178] Nor is there any notion of 'duties' of 'subjects' towards the (pre-christian) Roman ruler, however much that ruler is eulogized in official discourse as all-powerful.

The only sources that, from a surprisingly early date onwards, very much insist on duties, especially that of obedience, are christian sources. The reason is no doubt that christianity consistently stresses subjection and control. God, but also his representatives—the clergy—are routinely referred to by the term 'father', denoting a position of virtually unchallengeable authority in every Mediterranean culture. The term 'lord' is routinely applied to god as well as higher clergy. The image of god, or a priest, as a 'shepherd' is common, as is its converse, the image of the faithful as a 'flock' of sheep—animals easily terrified, anything but self-determined, and weak (note that other herd animals could have been chosen for this simile). Key functionaries of the church bear the title *epískopos* 'overseer', whence 'bishop'.

True, Zeus is addressed as 'father' in Homer, too, if less insistently. Moreover, *poimḗn laṓn* 'shepherd of peoples' is a description routinely applied to kings by Homer. An eastern origin of this simile has been proposed. Being found in Homer, the expression was likewise used by later authors, such as Pindar or the fifth-century playwrights of Athens. This was an implicit homage to Homer rather than an expression of the prevailing political culture, the more so as Greek society by that time no longer had kings except in Lakedaímôn. Plátôn in the *Politikós* discusses the simile, though in such an opaque manner that opinions are divided on whether he meant to endorse or reject it. Xenophṓn, however, despite his conservative outlook and his well-advertised admiration for royalty like the Persian prince Kýros (Kurosh) and Agesílaos of Lakedaímôn, expressly denies the validity of the simile. Tellingly for the political culture of pre-christian Greek society, he objects that herds of cattle or horses will readily do what the herdsman wants, 'but men conspire against none sooner than against those whom they perceive to be trying [!] to rule them'.[179]

Unfortunately, virtually nothing survives of the literature on kingship from the post-Persian Greek realms, with the exception of the so-called Letter of Aristéas, a second-century BCE Jewish text discussing royal virtues with specific reference to the then king Ptolemy of Egypt, and a number of fragments attributed to 'Diotogénês', 'Sthenídas', and 'Ékphantos' included in the fifth-century CE anthology of Iôánnês Stobaíos (4.7.61ff.). Whereas the Letter of Aristéas is compatible with the generally libertarian political culture of the pre-christian Greek world, the fragments strikingly depart from it. Oddly reminiscent in tone of both Thomas Aquinas and Giles of Rome, they depict the king not

[178] Cf. e.g. the index entry *eúnoia* in Ma (2002).

[179] *anthrṓpoi de ep'oudénas mállon synístantai ê epí toútous hous an aisthṓntai archeín hautôn epicheiroúntas.* Xenophṓn, *Kyroupaideía* 1.1. On *poimḗn laṓn*, see Schulte (2001: 26, 80, 104–10, 117, 211).

only as practically divine but as indispensable for the social order. 'Ékphantos' in particular moreover reflects an image of sacred kingship necessary to a harmonious cosmos and mirroring the superordination of god over the creation, a conception reminiscent of the kind of thinking displayed for example in the preamble of the coronation circular of Henry VII of 1312, or the cosmology of Engelbert of Admont. The status of those fragments is, however, unclear. No other sources mention them, nor can their purported authors be identified with any figures otherwise known; despite the archaic Doric dialect in which they are written they almost certainly date from the post-Persian, possibly the early christian era. They are not christian themselves, but, like christianity, reflect mid-eastern influence.[180]

Of course, christianity, through the intermediary of judaism, has mid-eastern cultural roots, too. Whereas for Xenophôn it was normal to resist authority, for judaism it was sacred: in the Old Testament man is called on unconditionally to submit to the deity in a manner alien to Greek or Roman religion. In line with this tendency to accept established authority, even Jesus supposedly admonished his listeners to 'render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's,' which in the context of the passage specifically refers to taxation.[181] The most famous, and, for the history of christian political culture, momentous call for obedience was formulated around the year 60 by another Jew, Paul:

> Let every soul be subject [*hypotassésthô/subdita sit*] unto the higher powers [*exousíais hyperechoúsais/potestatibus sublimioribus*]. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God. . . . Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? . . . For he [the 'ruler', *árchôn/princeps*] is the minister [servant: *diákonos/minister*] of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain . . . Wherefore ye must needs be subject [*dió anánkê hypotássesthai/ideo necessitate subditi estote*], not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For for this cause pay ye tribute [tax] also . . . Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom [toll, customs duties] to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.[182]

All this was new to western civilization. Although, in the pre-christian Graeco-Roman world, those in power would be seen as enjoying the favour of the gods, they were not regarded as 'ordained of', installed by the gods in any institutionalized fashion. One might revere them, but deferring to them was an act of prudence or indeed good will (*eúnoia*), not a sacred obligation. Not even the 'emperor cult' of the Roman empire—another eastern import—actually involved veneration of the living 'emperor' as a god, or an obligation to obey him. Rather, what was paid homage to—not, unlike 'real' gods, prayed to—was his *genius*, the Latin word for each individual's personal protective spirit; only after his death was an 'emperor' declared to be divine by the senate (an act known as *consecratio*). The ruler might be addressed as 'divine' even while he was still alive (as is Antoninus Pius in the second-century decree by the Lykian league quoted in Chapter 3),[183] but this was in the context of a religion that had a more casual attitude

[180] For a thorough discussion of 'Diotogénês', 'Sthenídas', and 'Ékphantos', see Goodenough (1928), as well as Schulte (2001: 135ff.). On the Letter of Aristéas ibid. pp. 159ff.

[181] Matthew 21.22.

[182] Romans 13.1–7.

[183] Supra ch. 3, no. 4.

towards the divine than did christendom. By contrast, the new ethos of obedience insisted on (here and elsewhere) by Paul was meant very seriously, giving the Roman ruler a potentially much stronger position than he held before.

It is true that Roman society had always been somewhat more ready than the Greek world to accept authority, and that it had always indulged in a certain paternalism, manifested notably in the institution of clientship discussed earlier. Indeed, senators were addressed as *patres*, fathers, and Augustus and his successors were honoured with the title *pater patriae*, father of the fatherland. As early as the late first century, Domitian insisted on being addressed as *dominus*, lord, the first Roman ruler to do so, if also, for a long time, the last. The title 'lord' was taken up anew only in the third century, somewhat before the adoption of christianity by those in charge of the empire. Absent from the second-century decree of the Lykian league honouring Antoninus, the title 'lord' is used in the—non-, indeed anti-christian—third-century petition from Arýkanda also quoted earlier.[184] This may be another indication that the same (eastern) cultural exemplars drawn on by Paul were also at work independently of judaism. At any rate, once christianity became the official religion of the empire, obedience, subjection, to its ruler, and generally 'the powers that be', at last did become a sacred obligation.

From at least the fifth century onwards, the ruler of the empire would routinely claim to owe his office to god: a gesture of humility at the same time as it bestowed a religious legitimacy unknown in the pre-christian empire. Thus, the western *augustus* Marcianus (in power 450–7) wrote to pope Leo I that he had gained his supreme position through god's providence as well as election by the senate and the whole army.[185] Iustinus (in power 518–27) similarly wrote to pope Hormisdas that he reigned by the favour of the Holy Trinity, as well as election by the dignitaries of the palace, by the senate, and by the whole army.[186] Justinian (in power 527–65) credits god as the one who put him in power over the empire, entrusted to him by the ruler of the heavens (*Deo auctore nostrum gubernantes imperium, quod nobis a caelesti maiestate traditum est*), and protests that rather than rely on his army or his reason he puts all his hope in the providence of the Holy Trinity (*ut . . . omnem spem ad solam referamus summae providentiam trinitatis*).[187]

In all those instances, god is not yet the sole source of legitimacy mentioned, as he would later become when kings, following the example of the Carolingians, would simply claim to rule 'by god's grace', *dei gratia*. But already god was always named first, and the simplification that consisted in naming only god was merely a matter of logic and time. In parallel with this development, the Roman ruler rose above the law. In his eulogy of Trajan, addressed to the Roman senate in the year 100, the younger Pliny still insisted that 'the ruler is not above the law, but the law above the ruler'.[188] By contrast, the *Corpus iuris* promulgated by Justinian states that the ruler is not bound by the law, *princeps legibus solutus*, a formulation credited in the text to Ulpian, a legal scholar active around the turn of the third century. Whatever standing this opinion had at that time,

[184] Supra ch. 2, no. 248.

[185] *Ad hoc maximum imperium venimus dei providentia et electione senatus excellentissimi cunctaeque militiae*. Leo, letter 73, Migne PL 54, p. 899.

[186] Iustinus ruler *primum . . . inseparabilis trinitatis favore, deinde amplissimorum sacri nostri palatii et sanctissimi senatus nec non electione firmissimi exercitus*. Quoted Wes (1967: 43).

[187] *Corpus iuris*, *De conceptione digestorum* praef. 1.

[188] *Non est princeps super leges sed leges super principem*. Pliny, *Panegyricus* 65.1.

its inclusion in the *Corpus iuris* made it part of official Roman law, with its enormous influence not just on Latin christendom, but even more so post-Reformation Europe.[189]

On the other hand, the new concept of a sacred obligation of obedience was matched by the equally novel notion that the ruler himself had *duties*. He was himself subject, and thus answerable for his acts, to god. Paul, in the passage quoted, calls him a 'servant' of god, which would have been inconceivable in a non-christian Graeco-Roman text. No more than a pre-christian Greek or Roman ruler would be seen as installed by the gods would he be considered their servant. He was as little beholden to the gods (although of course he was well-advised to stay on good terms with them) as he was to those over whom he exercised power.

Seneca, in exhorting Nero to refrain from cruelty in his treatment of those under his sway, invokes no moral argument but the idea that a cruel ruler will gain a bad reputation passed on even to posterity. He compares the position of the ruler with that of the father with regard to his children (in traditional Roman law, a father had power of life and death over his offspring), the teacher with regard to his pupils, the commander (*tribunus*) with regard to his soldiers, indeed, if somewhat obliquely, the master with regard to his slaves. (Seneca is of course exaggerating the power that this implicitly ascribes to his addressee, whom is seeking to flatter.) All those instances have in common their one-sidedness, the absence of any *mutual* obligation—certainly at that time. In every case, those in the inferior position could literally only hope for the best, for generosity on the part of the superior, which, especially in the case of a ruler, would be celebrated the more effusively as it was entirely voluntary. But neither, for Seneca was obedience an absolute imperative. He notes that a cruel father, teacher, or commander will often find his behaviour to produce undesired results: thus, a cruel commander 'will produce deserters, *whom yet no one will blame* [*desertores faciet, quibus tamen ignoscitur*]'.[190]

Compare this with the admonition addressed to the Frankish king Charles I by his English adviser Cathwulf in a famous letter of about 775:

> Therefore, my king, always be mindful of god who is your king, with fear and loving, because you have been set as his vice-regent over all his limbs [the members of the christian people, regarded as the mystical body of Christ], to guard and direct them, and to give account on the day of judgment, even for yourself.[191]

The idea that the gods might call Nero to account is present in Seneca, too (cf. the passage quoted in Chapter 2, n. 246), but the emphasis is different: it is treated as a hypothetical possibility, and one moreover that would simply give Nero another occasion to shine. If Seneca, whose real feelings for his one-time pupil were no doubt mixed at best, purports to treat Nero with unalloyed deference, it is because he had no demands to make. Cathwulf, by contrast, feels free, in the name of religion, to call on the powerful king of the Franks to be both responsible and humble, reminding the king that he will *have* to account for his reign and that how he will be judged is no foregone conclusion.

[189] *Corpus iuris*, Digest 1.3.31.

[190] Seneca, *De clementia* 1.16–18.

[191] *Memor esto ergo semper, rex mi, dei regis tui cum timore et amore, quod tu es in vice illius super omnia membra eius custodire et regere, et rationem reddere in die iudicii, etiam per te.* MGH Ep. 4, p. 503.

Three centuries later, in a letter already quoted, pope Gregory VII would make that point quite stridently:

> Kings and other princes ought to be afraid lest they be made to suffer the eternal fires of hell to a greater extent in proportion as in this life they enjoy preferential treatment over others . . . For they shall have to give account before god for all those that were subject to their rule.[192]

The notion of service is a corollary of the christian emphasis on obedience and finds expression already in the gospel:

> whosoever [Jesus says to his disciples] will be great among you, let him be your minister [=(free) servant: *diákonos/minister*]; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant [*doúlos/servus*: this typically means 'slave']: Even as the Son of man [=Jesus] came not to be ministered unto [=to be served, *diakonêthênai/ministrari*], but to minister [=to serve, *diakonêsai/ministrare*], and to give his life a ransom for many.[193]

The injunction was, to some extent, taken seriously by those in power. Since Gregory I (in office 590–604), the pope has referred to himself as *servus servorum dei*, servant of the servants of god.[194] Coins from the reign of Justinian II (*basileús* 685–95 and 705–11) show him standing with a large cross in his hand and the legend *servus Christi*, servant of Christ.[195] The emperor Otto III (late tenth century) included in his title the words *servus apostolorum*, servant of the apostles, and Henry II in the early eleventh century called himself *servus servorum Christi*, servant of the servants of Christ.[196] Iôánnês Zônáras, in the twelfth century, exhorts the ruler of Constantinople to be a steward, *oikonómos*, not a *despótês*, a lord or master, with regard to the commonwealth (*politeía*),[197] and Nicholas of Kues similarly insists that the emperor is not a lord or master but a steward, *non dominus sed administrator*.[198] Engelbert, as we saw, thought that 'in the natural order of things the king exists for the sake of the kingdom and not the other way around'.[199] Similarly, for Dante

> The citizens do not exist for the sake of the consuls and the people do not exist for the sake of the king, but rather the consuls exist for the sake of the citizens and the king for the sake of the people . . . Even though the consul or the king are lords of the rest with respect to the path, they are servants of the rest with respect to the goal, but especially the *monarcha* [emperor], whom we obviously must consider the servant of all [*minister omnium*].[200]

This is echoed in famous formulations by Frederic II of Prussia (reigns 1740–84): 'the sovereign, far from being the absolute master of the peoples under his domination, is really

[192] 1081; MGH Ep. sel. 2.2, VIII.21, at p. 559.
[193] Matthew 20.26–8.
[194] Canning (1996: 33).
[195] Description and illustration in Yerasimos (2000: 82).
[196] Canning (1996: 76–7).
[197] Iôánnês Zônáras 18.29.
[198] *Imperator, qui imperialium omnium non dominus sed administrator exsistit*. Nicholas, *De concordantia* §579; cf. §500: *cum imperator solum administrator in utilitatem rei publicae exsistat*.
[199] *Ordine naturali rex propter regnum, et non e contra*. Engelbert, *De ortu* 19.
[200] Dante, *Monarchia* 1.12.11–12.

only their chief servant';[201] or: 'A prince is the first servant and the first magistrate of the state; he is answerable to it for the use to which he puts the taxes.'[202] This whole theme would have been alien to the political culture of the pre-christian Mediterranean world, where those in power owed nothing to those over whom they had power even if they were expected to extend their generosity towards them. In this respect, the triumph of christianity marks a profound change, which proved durable even when the attraction and power of the church began to wane again—as Frederic, who was no friend of the church, demonstrates.

Christian and post-christian rule was thus necessarily conditional. A prince now had subjects, but he also had duties towards them. Something was expected of him; what, precisely, remained open to definition. Thomas Aquinas and Giles of Rome, as we saw, provided some answers: for them, a king had to maintain 'peace', or unity, among his subjects, incite them to be virtuous, punish wrongdoers, and direct them towards the life eternal. Nicholas of Kues, who cites them,[203] imitates them in this. Yet Nicholas, amalgamating the stress on popular participation that he found in Marsilius with the growing emphasis on strong princely governance, also foreshadows two other important aspects of post-Reformation political thought: the notion of the social contract—for Nicholas the ruler is ruler only by virtue of the consent of the ruled—and the expectation that a strong ruler will, above all, provide security. Although the term as such is not yet prominent in his text, the notion is implicit in his criticism of the situation in Germany, where according to him a weak central power meant that no one was safe (*nullus tutus*).

In Latin christendom, rule was conditional also in the sense that subjects retained the right to question decisions or demands by the ruler, and to disobey if they held them to be illegitimate. This had something to do with the difficulty faced by those in power to enforce decisions on a supralocal scale, a difficulty that diminished with the progress of monetization and the greater facility with which a ruler could act, including supralocally, through paid agents, armed (i.e. soldiers) or not (i.e. administrators or judges). The growing potential power of the ruler provoked two types of reaction: enthusiasm as well as vigilance. Some felt that greater power necessitated greater control. As mentioned, representative assemblies of the 'estates' of a realm or principality sprang up or were consolidated everywhere in Latin christendom in the fifteenth century, and the conciliar movement in a sense is simply the ecclesiastical equivalent of this phenomenon. Since the increasing potential power of princes was linked to the progress of monetization, tellingly what assemblies of the estates sought to control above all was taxation. Others, however, impatient with attempts to hem the ruler in, felt that the time was ripe for 'real' governance by a powerful ruler, which they hoped would prove the cure for all sorts of social ills. Nicholas of Kues, as we saw, wavered between those two impulses, while Enea Silvio Piccolomini came down firmly on the side of complete subjection and obedience.

So, after the Reformation, did the most influential theorists of strong princely governance, Jean Bodin and Thomas Hobbes. Stressing as they did the fullness of the power of the ruler, they were also at pains to make clear what was expected of that ruler

[201] *le souverain, bien loin d'être le maître absolu des peuples sous sa domination, n'en est en lui-même que le premier domestique.* The passage is from the first ch. of Frederic's *Anti-Machiavel*, first publ. 1740.

[202] *Un prince est le premier serviteur et le premier magistrat de l'État; il lui doit compte de l'usage qu'il fait des impôts.* The passage is from the section on Frederic I of Prussia in Frederic's *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de la Maison de Brandebourg*, first publ. 1746 (rev. edn. 1751).

[203] Nicholas, *De concordantia catholica* §378.

in return. Here the concept of security became central. However, the opposite strain, that of the need for the subjects to keep their ruler in check, continued into the post-Reformation period, too, being represented for example by Johannes Althusius.

4.3.3 Post-Reformation theorists of princely power: Bodin, Althusius, and Hobbes

4.3.3.1 *'Absolutists' and 'monarchomachs': Jean Bodin and Johannes Althusius*

In his *Coutumes de Beauvaisis* of 1283, a codification of the customary law of the Beauvais region, Philippe de Beaumanoir explains that

> Since in this book in several places we speak of the *souverain* and of what he may or ought to do, but do not mention counts or dukes, some might think that reference is to the king. But whenever the king is not mentioned, we refer to those holding a fief, for every holder of a fief is *souverain* within it. However, the king is *souverain* above them all [*par dessus tous*], and by rights has the general care of his kingdom, whereby for the common weal he may make as many statutes as he likes, and what he lays down must be observed.[204]

The passage shows that, on the one hand, there was no royal monopoly on political power, and on the other that nevertheless the king had a special position. *Souveraineté* was more 'naturally' attributed to him than to other lords, whose similar, if geographically more restricted competence Philippe finds it necessary to remind readers of.[205]

The word *souveraineté* is in fact derived from the Latin comparative *superanus*, 'superordinate, superior, higher-ranking', and not from the superlative *supremus*, 'supreme, highest'. (In the Latin of Latin christendom, the adjective *superanus* tends to supersede the 'classical' forms *superus* and *supernus*.) From the fifteenth century onwards, high-ranking law courts in Paris and other French cities came to be known as *cours souveraines*—an expression of course of their superordination over other courts and not of any 'sovereignty' in the more recent sense. It was only in 1661, when Louis XIV took power, that he had the adjective changed from 'sovereign' to 'superior' (*cours supérieures*—but historians of eighteenth-century France routinely refer to the *cours souveraines* even if they mention the 1661 measure, so perhaps the new appellation

[204] *Pour ce* [=*Parce*] *que nous parlons en cest livre, en pluseurs lieus du souverain, et de ce qu'il puet et doit fere, li aucun pourroient entendre, pour ce que nous ne nommons conte ne duc, que ce fust du roi, mais en tous les lieus la ou li rois n'est pas nommés, nous entendons de ceux qui tiennent en baronie, car chascuns barons est souverains en sa baronie. Voirs* [=*vrai*] *est que li rois est souverains par dessus tous et a de son droit la general garde de son roiaume, par quoi il puet fere tens* [=*tant*] *establissemens comme il li plest pour le commun pourfit, et ce qu'il establist doit estre tenu.* Philippe de Beaumanoir, *Coutumes de Beauvaisis*, ed. by A. Salmon, vol. 2, Paris 1900, ch. 34: *Des convenences*, §1043, p. 24; quoted Walther (1976: 96 n. 79), my trans.

[205] I render as 'fief' what Philippe calls *baronie*. In post-Reformation France, the term *baron* came to designate a nobleman of quite low rank; by contrast, when Philippe wrote, the term comprised the very greatest vassals of the crown (such as dukes or counts) but not minor local *seigneurs*. I am not sure, however, if this distinction is relevant to the point that Philippe is here making. If his terminology probably does not include them, he might nevertheless not have denied that even minor *seigneurs* were 'sovereign' within their *seigneurie*.

did not prevail). Earlier, in his highly influential *Six Books on the Commonwealth* first published in 1576, the legal scholar Jean Bodin (1530–96) had taken the step that we find foreshadowed in Philippe de Beaumanoir, redefining *souveraineté* as absolute rather than relative superordination. Whereas Philippe denied that only the king had sovereignty, Bodin asserts precisely that.

Bodin starts from the position outlined in the preceding section. Rule for him means exercising an *office* and serving a *function*, and being answerable to those for whose sake that office is held and the function fulfilled. There is a mutual obligation between the ruler and the ruled: 'The prince', Bodin writes, 'is obliged [*obligé*] to preserve [*maintenir*], by military force and the force of the laws, the safety [*seureté*] of his subjects [*subiects*] with respect to their persons, belongings, and families; and the subjects, by reciprocal obligation [*par obligation reciproque*], owe their prince fealty, subjection, obedience, aid, and assistance [*foy, obeissance, subiection, ayde, & secours*].' The relationship between the ruler and the ruled is still conceived here on the model of the 'feudal' order with its emphasis on reciprocal loyalty. But, unlike the social paradigm of Latin christendom, here there is only one lord, all others are 'subjects'.[206]

It is true that the concept of sovereignty even as redefined by Bodin still falls short of giving the ruler certain rights that nowadays are taken for granted as being vested in the 'state' or 'government'. Thus, Bodin denies that the ruler may dispose of the property of his subjects—probably because the right of property was considered by Bodin to be part of natural law, which even the 'sovereign' could not modify. Bodin is even opposed to the levying of taxes by the ruler, presumably because this, too, meant encroaching on the property of the subjects. Bodin holds that the king should properly be satisfied with the income of what belongs to the crown, that is, the royal demesne. He insists that even in a public emergency, such as in wartime, extra funds should be raised through loans rather than taxes, presumably because he feared that once granted such taxes would be difficult to abolish again.[207] Moreover, there were, for Bodin as for other French lawyers of the period, certain fundamental laws of the realm that the ruler had no authority to change. In the French case, this was true notably of the order of succession to which the ruler himself owed his office. In the French text, Bodin refers to such fundamental laws as *loix royales* 'royal laws', but in his own Latin translation of the work he calls them *leges imperii* 'laws of the empire'—in line with the tendency at that time to equate *regnum* and *imperium*, that is, to treat every kingdom as a legal equivalent of the (Roman) empire.[208]

Employing 'imperial' terminology, French lawyers thus spoke of the French kingdom as a *corpus mysticum* (the mystic body of Christ: this originally meant christendom, which, however, thinkers like Nicholas of Kues or Enea Silvio Piccolomini equated with the empire), or of the *Parlement de Paris* as an analogue of the Roman senate.[209] The Tudor kings and queens of England likewise display a certain fondness for such terminology. Henry VIII repeatedly qualifies his crown as 'imperial' in his official utterances: '[the] crown imperial of this our realm' (in the proclamation rejecting papal authority over the church of England, 1535), 'our imperial crown of our realm of England' (in the proclamation announcing the adoption by Henry of the title 'king of Ireland', 1542). On

[206] Bodin, *De la république* 1.7 (1583: 101, my trans).

[207] Bodin, *De la république* 1.8, 6.2; cf. Franklin (1973: 86–92).

[208] On qualified sovereignty in Bodin, see Franklin (1973: ch. 5). *Loix royales*, *leges imperii*: ibid. p. 70; Bodin uses those expressions in chapter 1.8 of his work (in both the French and the Latin edn.).

[209] Franklin (1973: ch. 1).

their accession, Edward VI in 1547 was proclaimed heir to the 'crown imperial of this realm, and other his realms', and Mary I in 1553 was proclaimed heiress to the 'crown imperial of the realms of England and Ireland, with the title of France'. When Elizabeth I was proclaimed in 1558, the document only spoke of 'the crown of the foresaid kingdoms of England, France, and Ireland'. But a few weeks later another proclamation specified her exact title as being 'the most high and mighty Princess, our dread sovereign Lady Elizabeth, by the grace of God Queen of England, France, and Ireland, defender of the true, ancient, and Catholic faith, most worthy Empress from the Orkney Isles to the Mountains Pyrenée'. This kind of grandiloquent, and often very long, title is typical of the post-Reformation period but not of pre-Reformation Latin christendom, and again demonstrates the heightened profile of the ruler in the 'social episteme' of the period.[210]

In a book published in 1566, Bodin himself had concurred in the opinion then prevailing among students of French law that the power of the French crown was limited, especially by the prerogatives of the Paris *parlement*, its counterparts in the French provinces, and the assemblies of the estates, and that the king could not legislate on his own.[211] By contrast, in *De la république* Bodin holds that the king of France alone held supreme power in the kingdom and was the sole possessor of what he calls rights of sovereignty, or in Latin *iura maiestatis*.[212] The fact that despite many intrinsic contradictions and logical weaknesses this book caused so much interest—it was reprinted countless times, as well as quickly translated into Latin (1586), Italian (1588), Spanish (1590), German (1592), and English (1606)—shows that Bodin had hit a nerve. Ultimately, the controversy that it helped to fuel oscillated between poles already represented by Nicholas of Kues and Enea Silvio Piccolomini (and indeed by Bodin himself, in 1566 and 1576 respectively): is the possessor of supreme power also, to some extent, controlled by the subjects, or only they by him? One of those who explicitly took issue with Bodin was Johannes Althusius (1563?–1638), professor at a Calvinist college at Herborn (in northern Hesse), then 'syndic' of the town of Emden in East Frisia, in a Latin work entitled *Politics, systematically discussed and illustrated with sacred and profane examples*.

Although his book did well (four editions in his lifetime), Althusius never quite achieved the popularity, or lasting fame, of Bodin, and as far as I am aware there is at the time of this writing still no full translation of the *Politics* in any other European language.[213] Althusius shares this fate of relative oblivion with fellow 'monarchomachs',

[210] Hughes and Larkin (1964: nos. 158, 208, 275, 388, 448, 451). This edn. uses present-day US spelling since in many cases no 'original' text can be established; even if, e.g., a copy of the original proclamation from the workshop of the royal printer survives, the many abbreviations typical of the period cannot be written out without arbitrary spelling decisions. Elizabeth not only, like her two predecessors, reiterates the English claim to the French throne, but reasserts English suzerainty over the kingdom of Scotland.

[211] Jean Bodin, *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem* (first publ. 1566), ch. 6.

[212] Cf. Bodin, *De la république* 1.8, where 'sovereignty' is explicitly equated with Latin *maiestas* even in the French text. Like *souveraineté*, *maiestas* is derived from a comparative not a superlative (from *maior* 'greater' rather than *maximus* 'greatest').

[213] Johannes Althusius, *Politica methodice digesta atque exemplis sacris et profanis illustrata*, first publ. 1603, 2nd enlarged edn. 1610. I have cited the 3rd edn. of 1614, considered to be definitive. A 4th edn. appeared in 1625, and the book continued to be occasionally reprinted after Althusius' death. There is an English trans. of part of the *Politica* (Althusius 1965), which is useful as an introduction to the work, but since I have not limited myself to the excerpts included there the work is quoted here in my own trans.

or 'fighters against the monarch', as the Englishman William Barclay termed them in 1600 (Barclay himself belonged to the opposite camp, the 'absolutists' or advocates of 'absolute' monarchy, but this is not a contemporary coinage: the word 'absolutism' only appeared in the nineteenth century).[214] Other such monarchomachs included Frenchmen like Theodore Beza (Théodore de Bèze) and the author or authors of the anonymous *Vindiciae contra tyrannos* ('A defence against tyrants') of 1579, many of whose arguments are taken up by Althusius, or the two Scotsmen George Buchanan and John Knox. All of them adhered to calvinist protestantism, a creed particularly prone to preaching resistance to the crown for conscience's sake, and an inspiration also for the English 'puritans', who played a major role in the temporary overthrow of the British monarchy in the mid-seventeenth century. None of them, however, offers a global, comprehensive theory of society and politics in the manner of Althusius, who therefore seems best suited for a comparison of this general position with the 'absolutism' of Bodin and Hobbes.

Unfortunately, for the monarchomachs, the prevailing 'social episteme', or ideological fashion, favoured a strong central power, and thus authors who supported this idea. That the two opposing camps actually shared many premisses is shown by the fact that their respective adherents might quite easily switch between them. We saw that Bodin in 1566 argued that the French crown shared its power with other political agents within the kingdom, only to contend that it did not in 1576. Likewise, in a textbook on Roman law the young Althusius had affirmed in the 1580s that the ruler was *suis et alterius legibus solutus*, not bound by any laws made by himself or by others; that the ruler had *plenum et absolutum imperium*, full, unrestricted power of command; and even that he was entitled to levy taxes—which Bodin, whom Althusius in his treatise cites frequently, disapproved of.[215] Althusius, too, later changed his tune completely.

As 'syndic' Althusius was really 'only' legal adviser and representative of the town council of Emden. In reality, however, he acted very much like the leader of the citizenry, encouraging their resistance to their nominal overlord, the count of Frisia. The town, on the mouth of the river Ems, is situated just east of the border dividing West Frisia, one of the provinces of the Low Countries and now part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and the county of East Frisia, now part of the Federal Republic of Germany. Following its near-total destruction in the air raids of the Second World War, little now reminds the visitor to this town of its wealth and self-confidence in Althusius' day. The rebellion of what became the 'United Provinces', the calvinist-dominated northern provinces of the Low Countries, against the Spanish crown from 1566 onwards proved a boon for Emden. Its port profited greatly from being safe from the war going on further west, and its population was swelled by calvinist merchants and other refugees. Unlike calvinist West Frisia, the county of (East) Frisia was lutheran. But with its size and prosperity thus enhanced, and its religious orientation altered, the town in 1595 officially abandoned its lutheran affiliation in favour of calvinism, and in the treaty of Delfzijl—endorsed by the emperor Rudolf—forced the count to give up much of his prerogatives over the town, though his suzerainty was confirmed.

[214] Gulielmus Barclaius, *De regno et regali potestate adversus . . . monarchomachos libri VI* (Paris 1600). According to Henshall (1992: 208) 'absolutism' was first used (in French) in 1823.

[215] Althusius (1588); quoted Dreitzel (1989: 22).

Friction between the town and the count continued, however. In 1604, the town council dismissed its syndic as being too sympathetic to the count and offered the post to Althusius, recommended by his *Politica*, first published the year before and very much in favour of restricting the power of the ruler. Althusius accepted, a decision no doubt facilitated by the 'rather extraordinary salary' (as one contemporary source puts it) that the town was willing to pay him and which later was repeatedly increased further; Althusius remained in office until his death in 1638. Under his leadership, the town in 1608 again rebelled against the count, who saw his residence and archive at Aurich pillaged by troops maintained by the estates of the county supposedly for its defence but manipulated by Althusius; in 1618 the town forcibly detained the count, who had come there for talks, for several weeks. When the count died, Althusius insisted that the town should no longer swear 'obedience' to his successors, but only 'loyalty'. Althusius pursued a policy of strengthening the estates of the county generally, against the count, but did not hesitate to put the interest of Emden above that of its fellow estates. Although Emden had been equipped with modern fortifications at the expense of the estates, Althusius after the outbreak of the Thirty Years War in 1618 refused to contribute to the defence of the county as a whole, and with his pro-Dutch attitude undermined efforts to keep the county neutral and out of harm's way. During the Emden years, Althusius meanwhile continued to work on the *Politica*, subjecting it to many modifications.[216]

The Althusius of the *Politica* rejects Bodin's opinion that sovereignty is vested in the ruler alone. Already in the preface, he formulates the opposite view:

> I have attributed the so-called rights of sovereignty [*jura majestatis*] not to the supreme magistrate [*summus magistratus*] but to the commonwealth or in other words the universal association [*respublica vel consociatio universalis*]. Most legal and political authors attribute them to the prince [*princeps*] and supreme magistrate alone. . . . By contrast, I, along with a few others, maintain that they belong to the symbiotic body of the universal association [*corpus symbioticum consociationis universalis*]. . . . I recognize the prince as the administrator, trustee, handler of the rights of sovereignty [*administrator, procurator, gubernator jurium majestatis*], but as the owner [*proprietarius*] and usufructuary [*usufructuarius*] of sovereignty [*majestas*] none other than the people as a whole [*populus universus*]. . . . For those rights of sovereignty establish and preserve [*constituunt et conservant*] the universal association. And as they have their origin [*inceperunt*] in the people, or the members of the commonwealth or realm [*populus, seu membra Reipublicae vel regni*], so also can they only exist in them, and be preserved by them [*non nisi in illis consistere possunt, et ab illis conservari*]. Likewise, their administration [*administratio*], entrusted by the people to a single mortal, the prince or supreme magistrate, reverts to the people . . . when he dies or is deprived of his office [*exauthoratus*].[217]

The terminology—*majestas*, *jura majestatis*—is Bodin's: even in standing the Frenchman on his head Althusius would be unthinkable without him.

If Bodin's theory put the emphasis on the ruler, Althusius stresses the primacy of the people:

[216] On Althusius' Emden career, see Antholz (1988) (*ziemlich extraordinarium salarium* quoted ibid. p. 75).

[217] Althusius, *Politica*, preface to the 3rd edn. (1614: not pagin.); cf. ibid. 9.20–7.

The commonwealth or realm does not exist for the sake of the king, but the king and every other magistrate exists for the sake of the realm and of the polity [*politia*]. For the people, prior, in the nature of things and in time, to its leaders, is more powerful than they, and above them [*Nam populus, natura et tempore prior, potior, et superior est suis gubernatoribus*].[218]

It follows that a people can exist without a magistrate, but a magistrate cannot exist without a people.[219]

Engelbert and Dante had said much the same, but did not go quite so far: they did not place the people before and above the king, at least not explicitly, nor did they assert that the people could do without him, or leaders in general.

Not least because Althusius did not regard the ruler as constitutive for the commonwealth, he was at liberty, unlike Bodin and Hobbes, not to regard that commonwealth itself as monolithic—as indeed no large realm of his day was. Althusius treats the commonwealth as a hierarchy of communities much like the scholastics, but in a more elaborate manner. It is the totality of those communities that for Althusius represents 'the people'. 'Private associations', in this system, include families and kinship groups (*familiae et cognationes*) established by marriage or blood ties, and 'minor corporations' (*collegia minora*—such as craftsmen's guilds, but also associations of clerics, judges, and the like). 'Public associations' include municipalities (*universitates*), defined as 'associations, established by means of laws, of a number of married couples, families, and corporations and inhabiting the same place'[220] and taking the form of villages (*vici*), districts (*pagi*), towns (*oppida*), and cities (*urbes*); and provinces (or lands: *provinciae*), represented by their estates (*ordines*). The estates are made up of 'great corporations' (*collegia maiora*): clergy, gentry, towns, and peasants. Althusius regrets that peasants were not everywhere represented in assemblies of the estates (they were in Frisia).[221]

For Bodin, the commonwealth is made up of households (*mesnages*, *familiae*). By contrast, Althusius emphasizes that it is towns and lands that make up the commonwealth, not households or local corporations, just as a ship is not formed by planks, nails, and dowels, but by the prow, stern, and keel.[222] Bodin, too, considered corporations and estates useful and advocated their consultation.[223] But essentially, for him, there is the ruler on the one hand, the subjects on the other. For Althusius, 'politics' is not primarily about subjection or the exercise of power.

Politics is the art of associating people for the purpose of establishing, cultivating, and preserving a communal life among them. That is why it is called symbiotics [i.e. the art or science of living together; I have not been able to find out what other authors, if any, employ this term apart from Althusius.] The object of politics is the association by which, through an explicit or tacit agreement, those living together [*symbiotici*] enter into a mutual obligation to share whatever is useful or necessary for the communal life and fellowship.[224]

[218] Althusius, *Politica* 18.8 (1614: 279).
[219] Althusius, *Politica* 19.15 (1614: 332).
[220] Althusius, *Politica* 5.8 (1614: 60).
[221] Althusius, *Politica* 2–8.
[222] Althusius, *Politica* 9.5 (1614: 168–9).
[223] Bodin, *De la république* 3.7.
[224] *Politica est ars homines ad vitam socialem inter se constituendam, colendam et conservandam consociandi. Unde symbiôtikế* [spelled with Greek letters in the original] *vocatur. Proposita* [? – *propositum*?] *igitur Politicae est consociatio, qua pacto expresso, vel tacito, symbiotici inter se invicem*

The communities, on every level, of 'those living together' are based on such an 'explicit or tacit agreement'. Althusius is evidently inspired by a definition of Cicero already cited, and which he, too, adduces: *Est igitur res publica res populi, populus autem . . . coetus multitudinis iuris consensu et utilitatis communione sociatus*, 'The commonwealth' [literally 'the public cause'], then, is the cause of the people, and the people . . . is a group associated by consensus on what is the law, and ties of mutual interest.' As I have pointed out earlier, this formulation, often taken as a definition of the 'state', omits any mention of a governing agency, let alone of subordination to it.[225]

Why certain towns and countries should be part of a given 'universal association'—the expression that Althusius uses as the generic term to designate the greatest, and fully autonomous, political unit—but not others seems not to be explained in the book, except indirectly in that Althusius considers the *consociatio* or association to be voluntary at every level. This is true all the way down to the smallest and most basic units, and despite the fact that these are described as 'natural': even the *domestica et naturalis consociatio* of families and kinship groups consists of individuals bound together, and acknowledging a single leader, 'by their own consent [*consensu suo*]'.[226] Similarly, Althusius says of the *consociatio universalis* that it is 'a people, merged into one body by the consent of several symbiotic associations and particular corporations, or of the bodies of several associations, and gathered under one law'.[227] Membership in a 'universal association', then, is in effect based on a right of self-determination exercised separately by each of the subdivisions, or smaller associations, forming part of a commonwealth.

Decision-making for Althusius is mainly in the hands of assemblies recruited from among the members of the various associations—the councils (*senatus*) of the towns, the estates of the *provinciae*, the estates of the realm in its entirety, with the latter described as as 'the epitome [*epitome*] of the polity or realm'.[228] Concerning the ruler, Althusius pushes to its extreme the notion that, a mere 'steward' and 'servant', he has duties to fulfil—failing which he can be dismissed: a corollary that earlier authors had been reluctant to admit.

> The people has entrusted itself to the governance of the king on certain conditions and terms, retaining, in certain conditions, power and authority [*potestas et autoritas*] over the king should he prove unworthy. His leadership and stewardship is not unrestricted, absolute, and completely free [*Directio et administratio haec, non est plena absoluta et liberrima*] . . . but aimed at their welfare and circumscribed and limited by certain laws. . . . Individual subjects are under the king, but in their entirety they are above the king. . . . If he exercises his stewardship properly, he is paramount [*praeest*] with regard to the individuals to the extent that he is the executor, guardian, and servant of the law [*quatenus legis est exsecutor, custos et minister*]. . . . Hence, when he commands something that runs counter to what the law lays down, he falls under the

ad communicationem mutuam eorum, quae ad vitae socialis usum et consortium sunt utilia et necessaria, se obligant. Althusius, *Politica* 1.1-2 (1614: 2).

[225] Cicero, *De re publica* 1.25; quoted Althusius, *Politica* 1.9 (1614: 4).

[226] Althusius, *Politica* 2.4 (1614: 14).

[227] *populus in corpus unum, consensu plurium consociationum symbioticarum, et corporum specialium, seu corporum plurium consociatorum conjunctus, et sub uno jure collectus.* Althusius, *Politica* 9.3 (1614: 167).

[228] Althusius, *Politica* 17.56-7 (1614: 270–1).

power of the law and loses his superior status; in that case he becomes subject to those who carry out the law [*Ergo contra legis praescriptum imperans, legi fit obnoxius, et superior esse desinit; quo casu incipit subesse legis exsecutoribus*]. . . . As a result . . . he ceases to be king and a public person and becomes a private person, and thus if he proceeds and acts with evident injustice anyone is free to resist him.[229]

By contrast, for Bodin the ruler was above the law, and he denies that active resistance even to a tyrant was permissible; he does concede a right of disobedience if what the king commands runs counter to divine or natural law.[230]

What *are* the sovereign rights (*iura maiestatis*)? According to Althusius, generally they concern the implementation of what he calls the *ius commune* or common law, which for him consists in basic, natural law norms that he sees exemplified in the Ten Commandments. Apart from that, a given realm will have need of specific norms, tailored to its particular requirements, in such domains as trade, money, language, public offices, the bestowal of privileges, defence, the upkeep of common institutions such as a common treasury, arsenals, archives, and the like.[231]

If I am not mistaken, Althusius never spells out why the ruler is necessary at all, or if there is anything that should properly be left to his discretion. Whereas Nicholas of Kues, Bodin, or Hobbes all thought that the ruler was indispensable to ensure the safety, the protection of the subjects, Althusius, clearly in reaction to a climate of opinion eager to empower the ruler, seems almost exclusively concerned with protecting the people *from* their ruler. Far from pining for a strong ruler, Althusius actually posits that he should be kept weak. What power the ruler has is determined by the contract by which the people give him his mandate (*pactum seu contractus mandati*).[232]

The supreme magistrate possesses as many rights [*tantum juris*] as are expressly awarded to him by the associated bodies, or members of the realm, and what is not awarded to him has to be considered as remaining with the people, or universal association; for this is in the nature of the *contractus mandati*. The less power is given to those in command [*qui imperant*], the more long-lived and stable the realm [*imperium*]. . . . Absolute power, or fullness of power, as it is called, cannot be given to the supreme magistrate [*Absoluta potestas, seu plenitudo potestatis, quam vocant, summo magistratui dari non potest*].[233]

At his inauguration, the ruler had to swear to respect the laws of the realm: this was the practice everywhere in Europe, as Althusius is able to illustrate with abundant examples. The French king, too, did so at his coronation, posing a problem for Bodin: how could the king be above the law if he had to swear to uphold it? Somewhat lamely, Bodin argues that he was not actually bound by his oath, only expected not to alter the laws in question except for a weighty reason.[234]

For Bodin (at least the Bodin of *De la république*), the sovereign is sole legislator. Althusius has no patience with this.

[229] Althusius, *Politica* 18.93-5 (1614: 310).
[230] Bodin, *De la république* 2.5.
[231] Althusius, *Politica* 11.4 (1614: 198), 16, 17.
[232] Althusius, *Politica* 19.6 (1614: 328).
[233] Althusius, *Politica* 19.7-9 (1614: 329–30).
[234] Althusius, *Politica* 19; Bodin, *De la république* 1.8.

Nowadays general laws are made by assemblies. For it would be a mark of reckless and foolish arrogance for one man, or a few men, to consider themselves capable of giving adequate laws to some nation [*gens*], without its assent and the combined advice and opinion of many.[235]

What Althusius depicts is not so much a programme as a (somewhat pointed) description of what he saw around him, in Frisia, in the Netherlands, in the Holy Roman Empire, in Europe as a whole: everywhere estates and their assemblies were powerful, nowhere was the ruler a real 'sovereign'. France is a case in point: when Bodin wrote *De la république*, the country was shaken by religious turmoil and the crown was weak. Likewise, Hobbes published his *Leviathan* at a time when the English monarchy had in fact just been abolished, a result, not least, of the kind of ideas propagated by people like Althusius.

4.3.3.2 *Hobbes and the beginnings of IR theory*

The sovereign as a prerequisite of society: a break with tradition. Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) is the most radical exponent of the intellectual current favouring a strong, even omnipotent ruler. Like Bodin, he wrote his masterpiece *Leviathan, or The Matter, Forme & Power of a Common-Wealth Ecclesiasticall and Civill* against the background of political turmoil experienced first-hand: when the book was first published in 1651, two years after the execution of king Charles I of England and Scotland, Hobbes was living in exile in Paris. Hobbes explicitly states that the work was 'occasioned by the disorders of the present time'.[236]

Among the writers so far encountered in our overview of the western tradition, Hobbes stands out because of his explicit refusal to accept that tradition. His political thinking would be inconceivable without the christian ethos of obedience and obligation, or the redefinition of sovereignty popularized by Jean Bodin. But as Hobbes saw it, all western political thought prior to his own was pretty much useless. Whereas Bodin and Althusius are full of references to other authors, such references are largely absent from Hobbes. Only the very greatest, and ancient, western thinkers are deemed worthy of being named—albeit, more often than not, only to be trashed. Aristotle is singled out for the most acerbic criticism.

I beleeve that scarce any thing can be more absurdly said in naturall Philosophy, than that which now is called *Aristotles Metaphysiques*; nor more repugnant to Government, than much of that hee hath said in his *Politiques*; nor more ignorantly, than a great part of his *Ethiques*.[237]

Hobbes in fact repudiates Graeco-Roman political thought generally.

In these westerne parts of the world, we are made to receive our opinions concerning the Institution, and Rights of Common-wealths, from *Aristotle*, *Cicero*, and other men, Greeks and Romanes, that living under Popular [=democratic] States, derived those Rights, not from the Principles of Nature, but transcribed them into their books, out of the Practice of their own Common-wealths, which were Popular.... And by reading of these Greek, and Latine Authors, men from their childhood have gotten a habit (under a false shew of Liberty,) of favouring tumults, and of licentious controlling the actions of their Soveraigns; and again of controlling

[235] Althusius, *Politica* 29.4 (1614: 609).
[236] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, A Review and Conclusion (1985: 728).
[237] Hobbes, *Leviathan* 46 (1985: 687; Hobbes' italics).

those controllers, with the effusion of so much blood; as I think I may truly say, there was never any thing so deerly bought, as these Western parts have bought the learning of the Greek and Latine tongues.[238]

The great problem with pre-christian political thinkers was their rejection of dominion, of strong rule, particularly by a single person, which had exercised a deplorable influence on all later western thinking: 'as to Rebellion in particular against Monarchy; one of the most frequent causes of it, is the Reading of the books of Policy, and Histories of the antient Greeks, and Romans'[239]—even though, actually, more recent calvinist writers, not of course mentioned by Hobbes, were perhaps more to blame. Western thinking, for Hobbes, being thus hopelessly vitiated, it was necessary to start afresh, which is what Hobbes proposes to do. Salvation from all sorts of social problems lay in strong, unitary rule, preferably by one man. As we have seen, this was hardly a new idea. But Hobbes fails to acknowledge any positive contribution to his own theory by earlier authors and instead implicitly dismisses them all for not having been sufficiently radical. One had to be systematic and rigorous in developing a theory of politics, not intuitive and pragmatic—'unlesse we shall think there needs no method in the study of the Politiques, (as there does in the study of Geometry,) but onely to be lookers on; which is not so. For the Politiques is the harder study of the two.'[240] Not for the last time in the academic treatment of politics (or international relations), what Hobbes was dreaming of was social science as 'hard science': 'The skill of making, and maintaining Common-wealths, consisteth in certain Rules, as doth Arithmetique and Geometry; not . . . in Practise onely.'[241]

If there really were such rules of politics, why had no one yet found them? Obviously, the Greeks and Romans had something to answer for, but in dealing with this anticipated objection Hobbes here puts forward a different argument: that, quite simply, *someone* had to be the first to find those rules. 'Time, and Industry, produce every day new knowledge.'[242] In reality, what Hobbes offers is not new knowledge but skilful advocacy, under cover of scientific objectivity, of an ideology that (albeit in less radical form) many people of his time adhered to anyway and would have adhered to without him. He presents an impressively coherent body of thought, but the simple premisses with which he begins are wilfully selective and intrinsically questionable—for example: 'in the first place, I put for a generall inclination of all mankind, a perpetuall and restlesse desire for Power after power, that ceaseth onely in Death.'[243] What Hobbes presents as deductive reasoning is actually inductive: it was the message itself, a personal, subjective, political choice on issues hotly debated in his day, that was Hobbes' real starting point.

Hobbes' sovereign is not bound by human law of any kind. As a result, it is not possible to enter into a treaty with him: he cannot be bound by it. The social contract, then, that had been posited at least since Nicholas of Kues, for Hobbes cannot be concluded between the sovereign and his subjects, but only among the subjects themselves: they agree among themselves to give up all power to the sovereign. But Hobbes is splitting

[238] Hobbes, *Leviathan* 21 (1985: 267–8; Hobbes' italics). Cf. ibid. ch. 46: 'From Aristotles Civill Philosophy, they have learned, to call all manner of Common-wealths but the Popular, (such as was at that time the state of Athens,) *Tyranny*.' (Hobbes 1985: 698; Hobbes' italics.)

[239] Hobbes, *Leviathan* 29 (1985: 369).

[240] Hobbes, *Leviathan* 30 (1985: 392).

[241] Hobbes, *Leviathan* 20 (1985: 261).

[242] Hobbes, *Leviathan* 30 (1985: 378).

[243] Hobbes, *Leviathan* 11 (1985: 161).

hairs. Although he claims that the sovereign cannot be bound by this treaty, Hobbes nevertheless admits that, along with the power, it bestows on him an 'end', a function—'The Office of the Soveraign . . . consisteth in the end, for which he was trusted with the Soveraign Power, namely the procuration of the *safety of the people*'[244]—and that if he fails to fulfil this function he loses his position:

> The Obligation of Subjects to the Soveraign, is understood to last as long, and no longer, than the power lasteth, by which he is able to protect them. For the right men have by Nature to protect themselves, when none else can protect them, can by no Covenant be relinquished.[245]

It is difficult to see how this is different from a treaty whereby the sovereign promises protection in return for power.

In any case, even the treaty between the subjects is actually fictitious. Hobbes infers from his analysis of human nature that autonomous individuals would have to make such a treaty to protect themselves from each other, and further, that the sovereign created by this treaty would then necessarily have the right to treat individuals not parties to the treaty as enemies and force them into subjection. This being a logical necessity, the sovereign is legitimate whether or not such a treaty was ever concluded in fact; for the same reason there is no need ever to renew it. Hobbes actually doubts that any sovereign was ever created from voluntary subjection rather than usurpation: 'there is scarce a Commonwealth in the world, whose beginnings can in conscience be justified.'[246] Put the other way around, as long as the sovereign protects the subjects from each other and from outsiders, how he obtained his position is of no importance. Although Hobbes is often described as a 'contractarian', a theorist of the social contract, the treaty on which the position of the sovereign is supposedly founded thus turns out to be a redundant element of his thinking.

Hobbes famously posits that there can be no social life, material well-being, or culture without subjection to, and coercion by, a sovereign:

> during the time men live without a common Power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called Warre; and such a warre, as is of every man, against every man. . . . In such condition, there is no place for Industry, because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no Culture of the Earth; . . . no Arts, no Letters, no Society; and which is worst of all, continuall feare, and danger of violent death; And the life of man, solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short.[247]

This has long become a familiar passage; but when it was new it shocked readers brought up on the notion propagated by Aristotle that man was by nature a social being, *politikón zôi on*.

Hobbes compares the sovereign to the biblical Leviathan, a mythical creature from whose description in the Book of Job he quotes two verses (41.33–4): 'There is nothing on earth, to be compared with him. He is made so as not to be afraid. Hee seeth every high thing below him; and is King of all the children of pride.'[248] The rest of the description,

[244] Hobbes, *Leviathan* 30 (1985: 376; Hobbes' italics).
[245] Hobbes, *Leviathan* 21 (1985: 272).
[246] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, A Review and Conclusion (1985: 722); cf. ibid. 28 (1985: 360).
[247] Hobbes, *Leviathan* 13 (1985: 184–6).
[248] Hobbes, *Leviathan* 28 (1985: 362). This is not the trans. of the King James Bible.

not quoted by Hobbes, is quite forbidding. Oddly, too, the prophet Isaiah (27.1) predicts that 'the lord with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent,' and Psalm 74 praises god for delivery from this monster (verse 14: 'Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces').

But, if an all-powerful ruler was so desirable, why had people never yet seen one? 'The greatest objection is, that of the Practise; when men ask, where, and when, such Power has by Subjects been acknowledged. But one may ask them again, when, or where has there been a Kingdome long free from Sedition and Civill Warre.'[249] The implied answer to this rhetorical question is clearly: never and nowhere, as yet. Today's readers of Hobbes tend to overlook that he is presenting a vision and not describing something that was even close to being implemented in his own time, let alone in any earlier period.

Hobbes as pioneer of today's concept of statehood. In previous publications I have been guilty of downplaying Hobbes' theory of 'international', or interstate, relations. I have argued that this alleged theory is limited to scattered bits and pieces, over-interpreted or indeed misinterpreted by present-day IR authors. Thus, I have observed that the famous passage in chapter 13 of *Leviathan* about the natural state of war between 'kings and persons of sovereign authority' speaks of relations between individuals, which cannot simply be equated with interstate relations[250]—but it can, as we shall see shortly. It is true that there are only scattered elements of a theory of interstate relations in Hobbes. Yet taken together they do add up to a coherent approach, centred on something that Hobbes at least occasionally calls 'state' and which is largely equivalent to what is nowadays understood by that term. Moreover, Hobbes' theory of interstate relations is indeed comparable to the present-day 'realist' view of relations between autonomous actors as, at bottom, necessarily a constant struggle for power between them.

Writing in Latin, Althusius had no word for the 'state' (paradoxically, since that word is derived from the Latin *status*). Instead, his generic term for the greatest autonomous political unit is *consociatio universalis* or universal association, which he uses alongside *politia*, *imperium*, *regnum*, and *respublica*. In his *Politica,* they all mean the same thing. Like Bodin, Althusius uses *regnum* 'kingship' and *imperium* 'empire' indiscriminately; Althusius moreover inveighs against the tendency of some authors to employ *respublica* 'commonwealth' as an antonym to 'monarchy' (a sense that has since come to prevail: 'republic'). This refusal to look at whether power in them was shared or not to distinguish types of political association is of course in keeping with Althusius' notion that power should as far as possible remain with the 'people' in any event.[251] Bodin, on the other hand, routinely uses the word *état* (*estat*) to designate political units, synonymously with *république* (commonwealth) and *royaume* (kingdom) (e.g. chapter 2.1: *l'estat de France*). At the same time, Bodin uses the word to designate the estates within the kingdom (e.g. in the same chapter *les trois estats* 'the three estates', i.e. burgesses, nobility, and clergy). Similarly, Hobbes routinely uses *state* to mean that which the sovereign is in power over—though again this is not the only meaning of the word in Hobbes.

[249] Hobbes, *Leviathan* 20 (1985: 260–1).
[250] Osiander (1995: 253); Osiander (2001*b*: 19–20).
[251] Althusius, *Politica* 9.3-4 (1614: 167–8).

For a long time, 'state' and 'estate' were used interchangeably in English. In *Leviathan* we still find 'estate' where current usage would require 'state': 'the estate [=condition] of Man can never be without some incommodity or other,' or 'no new evill is thereby on any man Inflicted; he is onely left in the estate he was in before.'[252] Elsewhere the word evidently means 'government' or 'form of government', as in the passage already quoted: 'Greeks and Romanes . . . living under Popular States' (where, the context makes clear, Hobbes uses 'popular' to render *dêmokratikós* in Aristotle); likewise (despite the variant spelling) in the passage 'Monarchy . . . bitten to the quick, by those Democraticall writers, that continually snarle at that estate.' Elsewhere again, Hobbes speaks of the pre-christian supreme priest of the Romans (the *pontifex maximus*) as 'an officer subject to the Civill State'. What he means is 'subject to the civil authorities'; 'civil state' is used several times in the chapter in question and evidently synonymous with such expressions, also employed in that chapter, as 'civil dominion', 'civil sovereign', 'civil power', and 'civil laws'.[253]

The *Oxford English Dictionary* dates the earliest use of 'state' in the sense of 'body politic' to 1538. Hobbes often does employ the word in this sense, treating the 'state' (body politic) as a bounded community, homogeneous in its subjection to a central power. Bodin clearly separates the sovereign from the 'state' (*état*), in the sense of the community of the subjects. For Althusius, the people is sovereign, not the ruler. Hobbes is ambiguous. By virtue of the fictitious treaty of subjection the sovereign is both the creature of those who concluded it (even though, in practice, no one *actually* concluded it), and their lord—a notion already developed by Nicholas of Kues. At the beginning of his book Hobbes expressly equates both 'commonwealth' and 'state' with Latin *civitas* 'citizenry', as well as with the 'artificial' person of the Leviathan or sovereign: 'that great LEVIATHAN called a COMMON-WEALTH, or STATE, (in latine CIVITAS) which is but an Artificiall Man.' According to Hobbes, 'every Subject is Author of every act the Soveraign doth.'[254]

This step in the direction of the notion of corporate sovereignty (a notion absent from Bodin, but already present in Althusius) is interesting if also (again) redundant, since in the context of Hobbes' theory nothing of substance rides on this. Perhaps the idea was to suggest some sort of 'democratic' legitimation of the sovereign—which it would be tempting to see as a half-conscious nod to the monarchomachs, 'those Democraticall writers, that continually snarle at [Monarchy]'. But elsewhere, as we saw, Hobbes is clear that the sovereign needs no legitimation other than effectiveness. For Hobbes, the sovereign might be either a single person or, less ideally, an assembly; in his text he usually treats the sovereign as a person, more concretely a man (by employing male pronouns).

All power not exercised by the ruler is still his, only delegated: '[N]o man but the Soveraign, receiveth his power *Dei gratia* simply; that is to say, from the favour of none but god: All other [*sic*], receive theirs from the favour and providence of god, and their Soveraigns.'[255] The sovereign makes and unmakes the laws without being bound by them:

[252]Hobbes, *Leviathan* 18 (1985: 238); 28 (1985: 354).

[253]Hobbes, *Leviathan* 21 (1985: 267); 29 (1985: 370); 47 (1985: 705).

[254]Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Introduction (1985: 81); 21 (1985: 265); cf. Nicholas of Kues, *De concordantia* §331 (supra n. 144).

[255]Hobbes, *Leviathan* 23 (1985: 291).

The Legislator in all Common-wealths, is only the Soveraign. . . . The Soveraign of a Common-wealth . . . is not Subject to the Civill Lawes. For having power to make, and repeale Lawes, he may when he pleaseth, free himselfe from that subjection, by repealing those Lawes that trouble him, and making of new.

For Hobbes, 'Law, properly is the word of him that by right hath command over others.'[256] This left no room for customary law:

When long Use obtaineth the authority of a Law, it is not the Length of Time that maketh the Authority, but the Will of the Soveraign signified by his silence. . . . And therefore . . . the Length of Time shal bring no prejudice to his Right.[257]

Hobbes also disagrees with Bodin that the sovereign cannot alter the law of succession:

There is no perfect forme of Government, where the disposing of the Succession is not in the present Soveraign.[258]

All of this was far removed from contemporary reality. No *ancien régime* monarch could afford to call in question, let alone abrogate in any very aggressive manner, the customary law followed by his subjects—and that meant the vast bulk of the law, since the kind of quasi-perpetual and all-encompassing legislative activity typical of today's politics was then unknown. Likewise, however much he might be called a 'sovereign', a ruler could not easily change the law of succession that had become customary in a given kingdom or principality.

The phrase attributed to the thirteenth-century English lawyer Henry de Bracton, *lex facit regem* 'the law makes the king', remained valid throughout the *ancien régime*—an empirical social fact that did not prevent Hobbes from pouring ridicule on the notion of the rule of law (and, once again, on Aristotle while he was at it). Bodin, as we saw, shied away from a radical, consistent approach in this respect: his sovereign was not supposed to touch the law of succession, or the property of his subjects even in the form of taxes, and had to expect passive resistance if his commands were deemed unethical. Hobbes, who evidently prided himself on his rigour, admits no such qualifications. His sovereign really is above the law, *legibus solutus*:

this is another Errour of Aristotles Politiques [*Politiká* 1292*a*: 32], that in a wel ordered Common-wealth, not Men should govern, but the Laws. What man, that has his naturall Senses, though he can neither write nor read, does not find himself governed by them he fears, and beleeves can kill or hurt him when he obeyeth not? or that beleeves the Law can hurt him; that is, Words, and Paper, without the Hands, and Swords of men?[259]

If, in Hobbes' vision, everybody is not equal before the law, nevertheless they are necessarily equal before the sovereign.

The safety of the People, requireth further, from him, or them that have the Soveraign Power, that Justice be equally administred to all degrees of People; that is, that as well the rich, and mighty, as poor and obscure persons, may be righted of the injuries done them; so as the great,

[256] Hobbes, *Leviathan* 15 (1985: 217).
[257] Hobbes, *Leviathan* 26 (1985: 312–13).
[258] Hobbes, *Leviathan* 19 (1985: 247).
[259] Hobbes, *Leviathan* 46 (1985: 699).

may have no greater hope of impunity, when they doe violence, dishonour, or any Injury to the meaner sort, than when one of these, does the like to one of them. . . . The Inequality of Subjects, proceedeth from the Acts of Soveraign Power; and therefore has no more place in the presence of the Soveraign; that is to say, in a Court of Justice, then the Inequality between Kings, and their Subjects, in the presence of the King of Kings [i.e. god]. . . . To Equall Justice, appertaineth also the Equall imposition of Taxes.[260]

This is strikingly more close to the state of the twentieth century (or its theory, anyway) than to any real existing kingdom of the *ancien régime*.

Neither Bodin, nor Althusius, nor Hobbes stress any territorial aspect of political community: none of them sees the territorial dimension of politics as important in its own right. On the other hand, political community as conceived by Hobbes is, at least, clearly demarcated: individuals are or are not subjects of a given sovereign, to the same degree and with internal divisions playing no role. One may therefore assume that the community of subjects of a given sovereign is clearly bounded also in a territorial sense—it is not to be expected after all that subjects of the same sovereign will be scattered over non-contiguous parts of the world, or intermingled with subjects of some other sovereign. Indeed Hobbes speaks of frontiers:

. . . Kings, and Persons of Soveraigne authority, because of their Independency, are in continuall jealousies, and in the state and posture of Gladiators; having their weapons pointing, and their eyes fixed on one another; that is, their Forts, Garrisons, and Guns upon the *Frontiers* of their Kingdomes; and continuall Spyes upon their neighbours; which is a posture of War.

And again:

For as amongst masterlesse men, there is perpetuall war, of every man against his neighbour. . . . So in States, and Common-wealths not dependent on one another, every Commonwealth, . . . has an absolute Libertie, to doe what it shall judge (that is to say, what that Man, or Assemblie that representeth it, shall judge) most conducing to their benefit. But withall, they live in the condition of a perpetuall war, and upon the confines of battel, with their *frontiers* armed, and canons planted against their neighbours round about.[261]

Comparison of those two passages shows that Hobbes in discussing the external relations of autonomous political units switches easily between vocabulary designating individuals on the one hand and corporations on the other. Kings and other 'persons of sovereign authority' are equated with states and commonwealths. What nowadays seems natural enough was new to the *ancien régime*; it is of course logical given Hobbes' (novel) notion that the 'sovereign' acts for (in place of) his subjects (or they through him). The two could thus be equated, and the state anthropomorphized: 'A Multitude of men, are made *One* Person, when they are by one man, or one Person, Represented.' The reason why the sovereign can be said to represent the subjects is that they have transferred all power they may have held to him (as in *ancien régime* society they in fact had not). (If the sovereign is not one person but an assembly, then according to Hobbes it is

[260] Hobbes, *Leviathan* 30 (1985: 385–6).
[261] Hobbes, *Leviathan* 13 (1985: 187–8; my emphasis) and 21 (1985: 266; my emphasis).

the majority within that assembly that on a given issue may be taken to represent the subjects.)[262]

As I said earlier, nothing in Hobbes' theory actually rides on this equivalence established between the sovereign and the subjects; it is semantic rather than of any substantive importance for the theory. Its ideological potential however was to prove considerable: in our day, the 'person in the street' interviewed on the politics of their 'country' (meaning, in fact, government) is likely to say 'we' when referring to those in power, despite the fact that he or she has no influence on what the government does. (Of course, unlike Hobbes' sovereign, the government of present-day states is supposed to defer to the 'will' of the people, allegedly expressed by means of elections. But that, too, is a form of words rather than a substantive assertion. At best, elections will have some limited influence on the identity of those in power—limited in that candidates not backed by the political establishment stand no chance—but only in the most indirect and tenuous manner on their decision-making.) Hobbes effectively treats the sovereign—a person—as if he were the state; but with that equivalence once established it is just as easy to speak of the state as if it were a person. The idea or, perhaps more appropriately, the ideology of the 'state' as a unitary political actor, which, therefore, may be equated with a person (and, in effect, its government), is a core element of the ideology of the state in the twentieth century and thus, of course, of IR 'realism'.[263]

On the basis of this conception of autonomous political units, Hobbes sketches a view of interstate relations that seems largely familiar to the early twenty-first century—because key elements of his thinking suffuse present-day political culture, which was not the case in his own time. Hobbes thus speaks, as we do nowadays, of ('foreign') 'states' and 'nations', of the decision on war and peace belonging to the central power (government), represented by such personnel as 'ambassadors' (though to be sure 'ambassadors' in the seventeenth century were not quite the same thing as what are so designated now, nor are 'messengers' or 'heralds' used any longer):

> [There] is annexed to the Soveraignty, the right of making Warre, and Peace with other Nations, and Common-wealths.[264]

> Publique Ministers abroad, are those that represent the Person of their own Soveraign, to forraign States. Such are Ambassadors, Messengers, Agents, and Heralds, sent by publique Authoritie, and on publique Businesse.[265]

A key tenet of Hobbes' theory of interstate relations is that they are characterized by a perpetual if sometimes latent state of war, with actors forever waiting for opportunities to outmanoeuvre one another in a zero-sum game. In this game, those without power lead a precarious existence.

> And in all places, where men have lived by small Families [which Hobbes regards as the natural form of human community], to robbe and spoyle one another, has been a Trade, and so farre from being reputed against the Law of Nature, that the greater spoyles they gained, the greater was their honour. . . . And as small Familyes did then; so now do Cities and Kingdomes which

[262] Hobbes, *Leviathan* 16 (1985: 220–1; quotation on p. 220, Hobbes' italics).

[263] On this, see esp. the excellent discussion in Wendt (1999: ch. 5), 'The state and the problem of corporate agency'.

[264] Hobbes, *Leviathan* 18 (1985: 234).

[265] Hobbes, *Leviathan* 23 (1985: 293).

are but greater Families (for their own security) enlarge their Dominions, upon all pretences of danger, and fear of Invasion, or assistance that may be given to Invaders, endeavour as much as they can, to subdue, or weaken their neighbours, by open force, and secret arts, for want of other Caution, justly; and are remembred for it in after ages with honour.[266]

forraign Common-wealths; who in order to the good of their own Subjects let slip few occasions to *weaken* the estate [= position? government? state?] of their Neighbours.[267]

And as for very little Common-wealths, . . . there is no humane wisdome can uphold them, longer then the Jealousy lasteth of their potent Neighbours.[268]

The last sentence seems to imply that units incapable of defending themselves only remain in existence because of a stand-off, a balance of power, between stronger units that begrudge each other the expansion resulting from absorption of weaker units. Equilibrist thinking is also found elsewhere in the book:

The Multitude sufficient to confide in for our Security, is not determined by any certain number, but by comparison with the Enemy we feare; and is then sufficient, when the odds of the Enemy is not of so visible and conspicuous moment, to determine the event of warre, as to move him to attempt.[269]

Since, for Hobbes, law can only either be natural law or consist of the enforceable decrees of the sovereign, there can of course be no 'international law'. 'Where there is no common Power, there is no Law: where no Law, no Injustice,'[270] Hobbes remarks with regard to individuals—but by the logic of his theory the phrase is fully applicable to 'states' as well: they are in the pre-social state of nature in which only natural law applies. This, for Hobbes, means that anything is allowed in order to ensure one's survival. In the traditional view of the period, natural law comprised rules of coexistence and of the treatment of others to be found among all humans (hence the traditional identification of natural law with the 'law of [all] nations', *ius gentium*). Hobbes rejects that tradition and redefines the concept completely. He retains the notion that natural law is what reason dictates, but, for him, this is not respect for others (or their lives, property, etc.), but only respect for oneself.

A Law Of Nature, (*Lex Naturalis*,) is a Precept, or generall Rule, found out by Reason, by which a man is forbidden to do, that, which is destructive of his life, or taketh away the means of preserving the same; and to omit, that, by which he thinketh it may be best preserved. . . . The Right Of Nature, which Writers commonly call *Jus Naturale*, is the Liberty each man hath, to use his own power, as he will himselfe, for the preservation of his own Nature; that is to say, of his own Life; and consequently, of doing any thing, which in his own Judgment, and Reason, hee shall conceive to be the aptest means thereunto.[271]

This natural law, in the sense of a natural right to defend one's own existence without regard for others, ends as soon as there is a sovereign to take over the protection of individuals that hitherto they had to ensure themselves. Between sovereigns (states)

[266] Hobbes, *Leviathan* 17 (1985: 224).
[267] Hobbes, *Leviathan* 29 (1985: 364; Hobbes' italics).
[268] Hobbes, *Leviathan* 26 (1985: 311).
[269] Hobbes, *Leviathan* 17 (1985: 224).
[270] Hobbes, *Leviathan* 13 (1985: 188).
[271] Hobbes, *Leviathan* 14 (1985: 189; Hobbes' capitals and italics).

it subsists. In this context Hobbes explicitly draws a parallel between individuals and sovereigns/commonwealths.

> Concerning the Offices of one Soveraign to another, which are comprehended in that Law, which is commonly called the *Law of Nations* [=*ius gentium*], I need not say any thing in this place; because the Law of Nations, and the Law of Nature, is the same thing. And every Soveraign hath the same Right, in procuring the safety of his People, that any particular man can have, in procuring the safety of his own Body. And the same Law, that dictateth to men that have no Civil Government, what they ought to do, and what to avoyd in regard of one another, dictateth the same to Common-wealths, that is to the Consciences of Soveraign Princes, and Soveraign Assemblies.[272]

> . . . every Common-wealth, . . . has an absolute Libertie, to doe what it shall judge (that is to say, what that Man, or Assemblie that representeth it, shall judge) most conducing to their benefit.[273]

Hobbes' image of interstate relations: not analysis, but ideology. Hobbes' depiction of interstate politics is derived not from empirical observation of Hobbes' own present or of the past (there is no discussion of historical events in *Leviathan*), but from a desire to justify a radical *normative* political theory, an ideology. Hobbes *needs* the state of war between individuals that he posits to legitimize his omnipotent sovereign. It is only because individuals are irredeemably evil, and incapable of constructive coexistence, that depriving them of all freedom can be defended at all.

Inevitably, such a radical stance must provoke doubts. Are men really so bad? Hobbes counters such doubts by adducing various observations from everyday life (*Leviathan*, chapter 13). The comparison between pre-social ordinary individuals and 'kings, and persons of sovereign authority' is the capstone of this reasoning. If readers still hesitated to accept that a state of nature as described by Hobbes ever actually existed, all they had to do was look at the relations between sovereigns, who for the purpose of the argument had the merit of still existing when other pre-social individuals at least in Europe did not. In fact, Hobbes himself was so little troubled by the prospect of foreign war that he saw no need for ending the state of nature as between kings by creating a global Leviathan.

> Kings, and Persons of Soveraigne authority . . . are . . . in the state and posture of Gladiators; . . . which is a posture of War. But because they uphold thereby, the Industry of their Subjects; there does not follow from it, that misery, which accompanies the Liberty of particular men.[274]

Hobbes even thought that the state of war might be a good thing to prevent domestic strife: 'when there is no common enemy, they [the multitude] make warre upon each other, for their particular interests'; and again: 'no great Popular [i.e. democratic] Commonwealth was ever kept up; but [e.g.] by a forraign Enemy that united them.'[275] One may wonder, of course, how it can even be that a commonwealth lacks a 'foreign enemy', if it is true that it is automatically in a state of war with its neighbours.

[272] Hobbes, *Leviathan* 30 (1985: 394; Hobbes' italics).
[273] Hobbes, *Leviathan* 21 (1985: 266).
[274] Hobbes, *Leviathan* 13 (1985: 187–8).
[275] Hobbes, *Leviathan* 17 (1985: 225); 26 (1985: 311).

Hobbes' image of interstate relations is no more based on an analysis of real social phenomena than his depiction of domestic society as characterized by universal unconditional subjection to the prince, or his contention that humans could only be in one of two situations: war of all against all or complete subjection. We have seen that, in fact, western civilization has known stages dominated by forms of cooperative social organization rather than rule, such as notably the Greek *pólis*; nor were the towns that played such a crucial role in the evolution of Latin christendom after the turn of the millennium based on subjection in their internal organization. In rejecting the notion that laws could be effective in the absence of a coercive central power Hobbes is historically wrong: as noted there was no such power for example in Greek society, which nevertheless found laws useful. Closer in time to Hobbes, Althusius paints a more realistic picture of seventeenth-century society as a complex conglomerate of nested communities each of which retained considerable autonomy—on which more in Section 4.4 of this chapter.

Concerning the domestic situation, Hobbes himself concedes explicitly that his vision is utopian, an ideal that would not become reality until people had grasped Hobbes' theory. Hobbes hoped that this would happen:

> considering how different this [Hobbes'] Doctrine is, from the Practise of the greatest part of the world, especially of these Western parts, that have received their Morall learning from *Rome*, and *Athens*; and how much depth of Morall Philosophy is required, in them that have the Administration of the Soveraign Power; I am at the point of believing this my labour, as uselesse, as the Common-wealth ['Republic'] of *Plato*; For he also is of opinion that it is impossible for the disorders of State, and change of Governments by Civill Warre, ever to be taken away, till Soveraigns be Philosophers. But when I consider again, that . . . neither Plato, nor any other Philosopher hitherto, hath put into order, and sufficiently, or probably proved all the Theoremes of Morall doctrine, that men may learn thereby, both how to govern, and how to obey; I recover some hope.[276]

By contrast, Hobbes presents his view of interstate relations as grounded in reality: the alleged state of war, and thus the state of nature, among kings is presented as empirical evidence of what would be the situation of all individuals were there no kings. However, the contention that there is indeed a permanent state of war between kings only works by virtue of some semantic legerdemain: 'the nature of War, consisteth not in actuall fighting; but in the known disposition thereto, during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary.'[277] This is not a very useful notion (useful, that is, other than for Hobbes' advocacy of a strong sovereign): no matter how long an absence of violent conflict lasts, or between how many sovereigns, by this definition it is still war since no one can guarantee its further continuance. Even a pledge by sovereigns to abstain from war, or indeed an alliance between them, could not end the state of war between them, since for Hobbes a treaty that cannot be enforced has no value: 'Covenants, without the Sword, are but Words, and of no strength to secure a man at all.' As with the state of war, this kind of assertion may be said to be corroborated in logic if one treaty out of a hundred is broken; and yet this defies common sense.[278]

[276] Hobbes, *Leviathan* 31 (1985: 407–8; Hobbes' italics).
[277] Hobbes, *Leviathan* 13 (1985: 186).
[278] Hobbes, *Leviathan* 17 (1985: 223).

4.4 The reality of late *ancien régime* society

And now, at the beginning of our reign, we can give our beloved estates of the realm and all its inhabitants no more forceful and convincing proof of our sincere good will than by expressing, along with them, rightful displeasure and fitting distaste for what is called sovereignty or an unlimited royal monopoly on power [*ett rättvist misshag och billig osmak för den så kallade souveräneteten eller det oinskränkte konungslige enväldet*], by whose effects the realm has, in manifold ways, been harmed, diminished, crippled, and almost emptied of people. Therefore, both for ourselves and for our successors we do hereby altogether abolish, quash, outlaw, and undo this noxious monopoly on power now and for all time to come. We declare, as the estates of the realm have likewise done, that whoever, by open violence or covert intrigue, aims to secure such a monopoly on power shall forfeit the throne and be regarded an enemy of the realm.[279]

In this fashion Ulrika Eleonora of Sweden, on her accession to the throne in 1719, forswore what to many among her subjects was clearly an enemy ideology. The passage from her *konungaförsäkring* or 'royal pledge' (a declaration traditionally part of the accession procedure) shows that the thinking of the monarchomachs could still score points in the early eighteenth century against the tide of 'absolutism'. The rejection of 'absolutism' in Sweden owed much to historical contingency. The Swedish rulers of the second half of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth managed to come ever closer to the *envälde* or monopoly on power condemned in the 1719 text, but eventually overreached themselves in their foreign relations. Much of the territory gained was lost again when a new opponent arose in the shape of the Russian czar, Peter I. Successful in his determination to obtain access to the Baltic, from which his predecessors had been cut off, he brought to that region resources and a geostrategic advantage—a vast hinterland—that the Swedish crown could not match, despite massive efforts that led king Charles XII to fight battles as far away as Ukraine. Meanwhile, the czar was building his grand new capital, Saint Petersburg, on the very shore of the Baltic, in what had until recently been Swedish territory.

When Charles XII was killed in a siege, the Swedish estates, assembled in the *Riksdag* or diet of the realm, elected his sister Ulrika Eleonora to succeed him, but imposed limitations on the power of the crown which her *konungaförsäkring* reflects. Henceforth, and until the new system was overthrown in its turn by king Gustav III in 1772, the Swedish crown could do virtually nothing without the consent of the estates. It was decidedly not sovereign: no one in Sweden was. Eighteenth-century Sweden is often belittled by historians as narrow-minded domestically and timid and weak in terms of its foreign relations, and contrasted unfavourably with the aggressive 'great power' of the preceding period. Yet contrary to what Hobbes would have his readers believe, it does not appear that life in Sweden was any less safe in the absence of a sovereign than under the *envälde* system. It was certainly more peaceful in that far fewer men were sent to their deaths on foreign battlefields.

In what follows, I propose to compare the social and political organization in the late *ancien régime* of two countries, of which one, France, is generally assumed to have been fairly similar to a 'state' as we know it, whereas the other, Germany, is ordinarily depicted as having failed to develop in that direction. In reality, until the French Revolution both

[279] Hildebrand (1891: 223–4).

countries conformed to a paradigm of social and political organization quite different from today's state, from which even in the late eighteenth century both were further removed than, for all their dissimilarities, they were from each other. One salient feature of this paradigm is that no central power in the *ancien régime* had effective domestic sovereignty, or presided over a unified, centralized polity. Power was shared between the crown and other actors, both at the centre (where, most notably, the German crown faced the *Reichstag*, and the French crown the formidable *Parlement de Paris*, though in neither case was the relationship one of pure opposition), and locally. To function, the crown and those other actors had to work together. They could also block each other: instances from German history could easily be adduced, but not the least striking example of this phenomenon is the domestic paralysis of late eighteenth-century France that led up to the events of 1789.

4.4.1 Germany in the *ancien régime*[280]

Ancien régime Germany always remained a country where the crown as such was weak—despite some important prerogatives that the emperor always retained, and even if in his capacity as ruler of the hereditary provinces of his dynasty he was a major European player. But the weakness of the crown far from rendered it unimportant in German politics. Its main function was to embody and bestow legitimacy. Inherited from the pre-Reformation period and deeply anchored in the political culture, its mystic prestige remained enormous. It may be that in the age of enlightenment the charisma of the crown began, in some circles, to wear thin. Yet the complex social, political, and legal structures that had come to be built around it trapped even the most cynical actors (like Frederic II of Prussia) in a tight web that they could not destroy without danger to themselves. It is no accident that until 1804 no German princes tried to secede from the empire, not even Frederic II—whose title to nearly all his dominions presupposed the legal framework of the empire and the legitimacy it bestowed, since they were imperial fiefs. Conversely, it is no accident, either, that those who did secede were no princes—the Dutch and the Swiss (and as we shall see, even they were strikingly reluctant to let go of the prestige and legitimacy radiating from the crown).

The complementary set-up characteristic of *ancien régime* politics is easily discernible in the German case. Power was divided between the centre—formed by common institutions, which in Germany included the crown, the *Reichstag* or imperial diet, and the two supreme courts—and other actors, most prominent among whom, in Germany, were the princes. However, as we shall see, the myriad local lords, quite independent of those princes, played a key role, too. Taken separately, almost all of them—meaning not just local lords, but princes, too—were weak; even among the most powerful princes few were at all formidable. But to look at them separately precisely misses the point of how the system operated. It is perhaps worth noting that no more than in eighteenth-century Sweden did the absence of a strong central executive lead to any insecurity. There was no standing army at the disposal of the emperor (in his capacity as such) or, until the eighteenth century, of most princes. Yet the country remained far from the apocalyptic

[280] Precise information about the constitution and politics of the 17th- and 18th-cent. Holy Roman Empire is still hard to come by in English and disinformation abounds. A more detailed discussion is provided in Osiander (2001*a*). I have further explored the theme of the absence of sovereignty in the German system in Osiander (2003).

vision put forward by Nicholas of Kues, for whom in such conditions 'no one was safe'. From the sixteenth century onwards, almost all warfare that took place in Germany was linked to conflict in the European system as a whole. For most of the period, the country was little affected by political or criminal violence. Feuds petered out in the sixteenth century as they did elsewhere—not so much (if at all) as a result of coercion, but due to the 'transformation of the social episteme' discussed earlier: faced with the growing prestige and resources of princes and the widening gulf separating them from minor lords, the latter came to see greater promise in seeking princely favour and patronage than in armed self-help.

It is normal for historians to apply the term 'state' to political structures under princely rule within Germany, rather than to the Holy Roman Empire. This is especially true of the dominions of powerful princes, such as, most notably, 'Prussia'. Yet what sounds like the name of some sort of 'country' is actually shorthand, in eighteenth-century usage, for the title 'king of Prussia', or 'the court of Prussia', after the elector of Brandenburg acquired his royal title in 1701. It designates not one territory but a whole bunch, of which Prussia proper was only a small part. If any actors within the Holy Roman Empire came close to forming something akin to a state as we know it, surely it would have been mighty 'Prussia'—so let us look at this seemingly 'hard' case in more detail.

When the emperor Sigismund, in 1415, enfeoffed Friedrich von Hohenzollern, steward of the imperial castle at Nürnberg, with the margraviate of Brandenburg, that lordship had seen better days. During the preceding century, it had changed hands often, with the various holders of the margraviate all foreign to the region. Frequently short of funds, they would sell or pawn lands belonging to the margraviate rather than lands that their dynasty had held for longer and considered part of its core territory. Nevertheless, the margraviate remained important enough for its ruler to be an 'elector', one of the seven princes whose right to choose the emperor was confirmed by the Golden Bull of 1356.

Like any other princely family of the *ancien régime*, the Hohenzollern dynasty 'collected' dominions. Newly established at Berlin (which they made their capital), they sought to regain lands previously part of the margraviate, though of course they also seized the opportunity to expand elsewhere if it presented itself. As usual in the *ancien régime*, law trumped military might here. The latter could be useful, but in a highly legalistic political system like the Holy Roman Empire it was not, by a long way, as useful as money. Often, what was purchased was an expectancy, which would fall due on the death of the current holder. Hohenzollern purchases included the lordship of Cottbus in 1445, the Neumark (New March) north of the river Warthe (Warta) in 1455, the lordship of Zossen in 1490, and the county of Ruppin in 1524. In 1535, the Land Sternberg (the area around Sternberg, now Torzym), the lordship of Krossen (Krosno), and the lordship of Züllichau (Sulechów) were added to the Neumark. (Where a place name is given in Polish as well as in German, the place in question is situated east of the Oder-Neisse line and thus now in Poland.) The lordship of Beeskow and Storkow was purchased in 1555/8. After the Reformation, the bishoprics of the region—Brandenburg-an-der-Havel, Fürstenwalde, and Havelberg—came under the control of Hohenzollern 'administrators' and in the late sixteenth century were incorporated in the margraviate. (In the Holy Roman Empire bishops were secular princes as well as church functionaries.)

After this, a main vehicle of Hohenzollern expansion became inheritance. In 1614, the elector inherited the duchy of Kleve (Cleves), the county of Mark, and the county of

Ravensberg, and in 1618 the duchy of Prussia. In 1637, he would normally have inherited the duchy of Pomerania, but it was the middle of the Thirty Years War and the duchy was occupied by the Swedes, who had a mind to stay. In the Peace of Westphalia of 1648, the duchy was divided: to his chagrin, the Brandenburg elector only got the eastern half, while the western half remained Swedish. The elector in fact received generous compensation from bishoprics that the catholic church at last gave up for good, agreeing to their transformation into purely secular fiefs that could be held by protestant princes. The bishoprics of Halberstadt, Kammin (Kamień Pomorski), Magdeburg, and Minden thus came to augment the Hohenzollern dominions. In 1701, the elector, with the consent of the emperor, adopted the title king of Prussia—the duchy of Prussia, whose capital was Königsberg (now Kaliningrad), was outside the empire: originally it was under Polish suzerainty, but in the seventeenth century a quitclaim was obtained by the elector. In 1702, the king received the principality of Neuenburg (Neuchâtel), the county of Lingen, and the county of Moers out of the legacy of his relative William of Orange, king of Britain.

In 1707, the county of Tecklenburg was purchased (and Moers raised to the status of principality by the emperor). A few years later, in the Peace of Utrecht the king was awarded a portion of the former duchy of Guelders bordering on Cleves and Moers. Never reconciled to the loss of western Pomerania to the Swedes, already in 1675 the elector had vainly tried to conquer it. It was only after the military disaster of the Great Northern War that, in 1720, the Swedish crown ceded part of western Pomerania to the king of Prussia (it kept the rest until the early nineteenth century). In 1740, young king Frederic II had no sooner mounted the throne than he exploited the succession crisis in the house of Habsburg to annex Silesia by force. In 1744, he inherited the principality (in Althusius' day, county) of East Frisia. In 1772, part of the kingdom of Poland was divided up, without a war, between Frederic, the czarina Catherine II, and the empress Maria Theresa. Finally, in 1780 the king inherited part of the county of Mansfeld.

The dominions listed were by no means all contiguous. In the late eighteenth century, they consisted of no less than nine distinct non-contiguous dominions or clusters of dominions, without taking into account 'splinters' (for example, the town of Krefeld on the lower Rhine formed part of the principality of Moers, but was separated from the rest of the principality by territory belonging to the elector-archbishop of Cologne, within which it formed an enclave). Without crossing 'foreign' territory, from the margraviate of Brandenburg proper it was possible, in the eighteenth century, to reach the Neumark, Silesia, Magdeburg, Halberstadt, and Pomerania. Part of the territory belonging to Magdeburg was geographically separated from the rest, but contiguous with the part of Mansfeld that the king inherited in 1780. It was only by virtue of the annexation of part of the kingdom of Poland in 1772 that the duchy of Prussia was linked geographically with the margraviate and the surrounding dominions. In western Germany, Ravensberg (around Bielefeld) bordered on Minden, Lingen bordered on Tecklenburg, and Cleves bordered on Moers and Guelders, but those three clusters remained geographically separate from each other. Completely without any geographical link to any other dominions forming part of Brandenburg-Prussia were the lordship of Cottbus to the south of the margraviate of Brandenburg, East Frisia on the North Sea coast, the county of Mark (in western Germany, with towns like Gelsenkirchen, Bochum, Hagen, Hamm), and Neuenburg (Neuchâtel, in Switzerland—it formed part of Prussia until 1857, when it became a Swiss canton). Note also that of all those dominions only one—Silesia—was

acquired by conquest. It could be argued that the acquisition of part of western Pomerania was due to the participation of the king of Prussia in the Great Northern War, and that the acquistion of some Polish territory in 1772 was likewise owed to military force even if there was no war. Even so, the bulk of *ancien régime* Brandenburg-Prussia consisted of dominions assembled by peaceful means.

They did not form a centralized, unified state until after the end of the *ancien régime*. Contiguous or not, all of those dominions remained separate political entities, with their own local law and their own political institutions (most notably, their own estates). It is true that there might be a degree of cooperation between some of them if they were situated close to each other. For example, although, even in the eighteenth century, the estates of the duchy of Cleves and those of the county of Mark (non-contiguous dominions, as we saw) remained separate bodies, they coordinated their activities. In both dominions, the assembly of the estates consisted of two separate councils comprising the gentry on the one hand, the towns on the other. In the eighteenth century, all four councils met annually in the town of Cleves, usually in November, but deliberated separately. At least they presumably listened jointly to the royal *Proposition*, read by a representative of the king and which indicated what the king wanted them to vote on. In little Moers, on the other hand, the estates assembled separately even though the principality was contiguous with Cleves. They were also organized differently, comprising all those who owned inherited rural property within the territory (thus excluding 'foreign' buyers of land at least in the first generation, but including peasants, not represented in Cleves or Mark).[281]

The king had a joint 'privy government' (*Geheime Regierung*) for Cleves and Mark headed by a president (*Präsident*), with a separate 'government' and president for Moers. With the possible exception of the president, the members of the 'government' did not come from Berlin but were local notables. In the case of Cleves-Mark, like the Imperial Aulic Council in Vienna it was formed by a 'noble bench' (*Adelsbank*) made up of noblemen (here, members of the local gentry), and a 'scholars' bench' (*Gelehrtenbank*) made up of non-noble persons with formal legal training; both benches had the same weight. Contrary to what its name might lead one to believe, and like the Aulic Council, the 'government' was essentially (though not exclusively) a law court; the same seems to have been true of its counterparts in other dominions of the king at least in western Germany, though they were organized differently.

In the eighteenth century, the actual administration of dominions like Cleves, Mark, or Moers fell to bodies called the *Kriegs- und Domänenkammer* or 'military and demesne chamber' (demesne chamber for short), established in an attempt by the king to instil a degree of homogeneity into the running of his dominions. The demesne chamber seems to have been organized in more or less uniform fashion throughout the Hohenzollern dominions, and it often had responsibility for several dominions that in other respects remained separate. Thus, when the new system was created in 1723, there was only one demesne chamber for Cleves, Mark, *and* Moers. Likewise, a single chamber was set up for Ravensberg and Minden, and in 1769 it was merged with that previously responsible for Lingen and Tecklenburg (conversely, however, in 1788 a separate demesne chamber was set up for Mark). Since what the king did with his demesne—local lordships and estates held directly by the crown—was considered essentially his own affair, he was

[281] Hartmann (1979: 264–5).

more free here to disregard boundaries between dominions. The 'government' of adjacent dominions might also be merged; thus, in 1719 the Ravensberg government was united with the one at Minden in order to save money.

However, the estates of Minden, Ravensberg, Lingen, and Tecklenburg always remained separate, clearly because that was what they preferred. In Minden, a territory formerly ruled by the bishops of Minden, the *Landtag*, the assembly of the estates, in the eighteenth century convened at no fixed interval, but at least annually and up to three times in some years. A meeting of the *Landtag* had simply to be signalled to the demesne chamber, not authorized by it. The *Landtag* consisted of two councils, made up respectively of the cathedral chapter and the local gentry. The latter, besides thirty-three holders of specified rural property, also comprised a catholic Benedictine abbot, a protestant commander—*Komtur*—of the order of Saint John, and the (male) representatives of three protestant ladies' convents. The canons of the cathedral chapter were noblemen, but, unlike the gentry, often from outside the territory. If they died in even months, their successor was appointed by the chapter, but prebends that fell vacant in uneven months were filled by the elector/king. The 1648 Peace of Westphalia laid down that until the religious schism between catholics and protestants was resolved peacefully, all dominions and ecclesiastical institutions in the empire (with the exception of the Habsburg hereditary provinces) would remain divided up between them in the way found to have existed on 1 January 1624. Not at all untypically, at Minden it turned out that on that day there had been eleven catholic canons in the cathedral chapter and seven protestant ones, and thus the situation remained until the end of the *ancien régime*.

In transferring Minden to the elector of Brandenburg, the 1648 peace also gave him the right to one quarter of the canons' prebends at the death of their current holders. In fact, the relevant provisions are somewhat unclear. About Minden, the peace treaty only says that the elector was to have it on the same terms as the bishopric of Halberstadt. Concerning Halberstadt, the treaty awards him one quarter of the prebends (*quarta pars canonicatuum*), with the proviso that catholic prebends would only be suppressed if there were not enough protestant prebends—indicating that the drafters of the treaty actually envisaged a reduction not only of the endowment but also of the number of canons. The actual number of prebends is not stated in the treaty for either bishopric.[282]

At Halberstadt there were sixteen, but at Minden eighteen, so the number was not in fact divisible by four. The elector seems to have decided early on not to suppress any prebends at all, but simply to claim one quarter of their total endowment. The Minden canons, however, simply ignored repeated requests by the elector to provide him with an inventory of their endowment, until, in 1662, he sequestrated their possessions. Thereupon an inventory was furnished, but turned out to be incomplete. In 1665, the elector nevertheless made a treaty with the chapter by which the canons paid him 27,000 *Taler* and he declared himself satisfied. But he clearly was not—which is not difficult to understand seeing that in 1662 the Halberstadt canons, in a similar treaty, had actually paid him 100,000 *Taler*, even though that territory was hardly bigger and the number of prebends, smaller.

Evidently, he despaired of prevailing on the recalcitrant canons at least for the time being and took what he could get, but in 1684 he tried again. The chapter, on the other

[282]IPO 11.1, 11.4.

hand, considered its treaty to be final and legally unchallengeable and saw no reason to enter into new negotiations. It stuck to that view when king Frederic I made another attempt in 1711 and king Frederic William did so again in 1720. Unlike his two predecessors, however, Frederic William decided not to give in. As the chapter would not reveal details of its endowment, the king had it researched: in an elaborate inquiry interviewers were sent out to find and question all those who owed the canons dues or services both inside and outside the territory. Dues in kind and services were assigned an estimated equivalent money value, and the total assumed to represent 4 per cent interest on the total capital of the endowment. By this means, that total was calculated: in 1721, an irate king informed the canons that the quarter of their wealth that actually belonged to him amounted to 116,803 *Taler* and that the 1665 treaty was thus fraudulent and invalid.

As the chapter saw it, the result of the inquiry was legally irrelevant. A treaty had been agreed on, which the king could not now revoke unilaterally. His doing so was a breach of the law, and the chapter intended to have this view confirmed by the highest authority in the land. This was not Frederic William who, in law, was *king* only of Prussia proper; Minden was a fief of the Holy Roman Empire and in his capacity as possessor of that fief the king was answerable to the emperor. The canons therefore filed suit against the king before the Imperial Aulic Council in Vienna. In principle, the step taken by the canons was not unusual. Anyone in the empire could sue their prince before one of the two supreme courts of the empire, the Imperial Aulic Council and the Imperial Cameral Tribunal (at Wetzlar near Frankfurt-am-Main), which dealt with such cases all the time. Nevertheless, it was not every day that they heard complaints against the king of Prussia. At this time, both councils of the Minden estates, the chapter and the gentry, received an annual payment of 300 *Taler* from the king, the so-called *Dispositionsgelder* or discretionary funds. The draft of a royal rescript of 1721 concerning disbursement of this money is crossed out, with a handwritten remark underneath in the earthy German characteristic of its author: 'Are not to have any more discretionary funds until the quarter issue is settled. The bastards have filed suit in Vienna. F.W.'[283]

Early in the following year, the king composed an 'instruction' for his successor—the future Frederic II, as yet only ten—in which he passes his dominions in review and gives advice on how to treat the local 'vassals', a text remarkable for its eccentric spelling and the frank, mostly unflattering manner in which the king describes his subjects. Thus, according to Frederic William, the 'vassals' of Cleves and Mark were 'dumb oxen but malicious like the devil [*dume oxen aber Malicieus wie der deuffel*]'; likewise, the 'vassals' of Minden (lumped together with those of Ravensberg, Tecklenburg, and Lingen), were 'dumb and opinionated'. The king warns his successor that he would not be able 'to employ them much because they are too lazy to serve', but concedes that they are 'not as bad as those of the Altmark' (the 'Old March', an area west of Berlin).[284] Frederic William clearly had it in for the latter: they were

> wicked disobedient people who show no good will in anything but are refractory and are right frivolous people in their behaviour towards their prince. My dear successor must keep his thumb

[283] *Sollen keine disposicion gelder nit mehr haben, biß die quartsache zum stande. die schurken haben nach wien geklagt. F.W.* Quoted Spannagel (1894: 96).

[284] *Was Minden Rawensberg tecklenburg Lingen* [*anlanget*] *sein die wassallen dum und opinatre* [*sic*] *die Ihr nicht zu viehll amplogiren* [=*employ-*] *Könnet weiln sie zu Komode sein zu dienen aber sein nicht so schlim wie die Altemerck*[*ische*].

on their eyes and not treat them well. . . . This will show them that you mean to be master and they must be vassals and must have no share in your power.[285]

Among the 'vassals' of the Altmark, the king singles out the von der Schulenburg, von Alvensleben, and von Bismarck families as the 'chiefest and worst [*die vornehmeste und schlimmste*]'. Apart from a quick temper, such utterances evidently indicate a 'will to power' on the part of the king. But it is also clear that the 'vassals' or lesser lords of the territory had no intention simply to move over. On the contrary, the 'vassals' of the Altmark, at least, apparently considered that by rights they *should* share in the power of the prince.

It seems that the complaint by the Minden canons had an effect: in January 1722, at more or less the same time as he was working on the text quoted above (January/February 1722), the king softened his stance. In conciliatory wording he offered to abandon his claim if the chapter would donate a portion of its endowment to the military orphanage that the king had established at Potsdam. Yet again the canons refused, and the king thereupon confiscated some of their property in favour of the orphanage. As this does not appear to have been researched, one can only speculate why the canons evidently desisted from pressing their complaint before the Aulic Council, which it seems was withdrawn at some point. It could be something to do with the fact that the complaint came at a politically inopportune time for the emperor. Frederic William was, in fact, quite loyal to Vienna, and the emperor, Charles VI of Habsburg, had no sons and was extremely keen to have his daughter Maria Theresa recognized as his heiress and her future husband as emperor-designate. Frederic William recognized this arrangement in 1726 (secret treaty of Wusterhausen) and again in 1728 (treaty of Berlin) in return for a promise by the emperor to support his claim to the succession of the duchy of Berg (which he did not get—one reason why his son Frederic II annexed Silesia, or so he claims in his *Histoire de mon temps*). In this, for the emperor, highly sensitive situation pressure may well have been brought to bear on the canons not to insist on their complaint. Not that they ever acquiesced in their loss: they last raised the issue in Berlin in 1802, shortly before the *Reichstag*, in 1803, passed a law suppressing ecclesiastical endowments in favour of the local prince and thus pulling the rug from under the canons' feet.

Meanwhile, payment of the discretionary funds to the Minden gentry resumed in 1727 and to the chapter in 1736, even though it seems that for the remainder of his reign Frederic William refused all direct communication with the canons. Thus it was that when he was succeeded by his son, Frederic II, in 1740, the new king was only greeted by the gentry, not by the chapter, in a written address thanking him for the confirmation of their rights and privileges. Those rights and privileges were pretty much typical. The estates voted the taxes levied in the countryside—not the *Akzise* or excise levied in the towns, which were considered part of the princely demesne, but, it would appear, the *Contribution*, a direct tax paid by the population of the countryside (not of the towns), though not (except in Prussia proper and in Silesia) by the local lords themselves. They were to be consulted on all measures concerning the territory. They insisted on what

[285] *Die Altmerckische Vasallen sein schlimme ungehorsame leutte die dar nichts mit guhten tuhn sondern Reweche* [*revêche*] *sein und rechte leichtfertige leutte gegen Ihren Landesherren sein. Mein lieber Successor mus sie den Daum auf die augen halten und mit Ihnen nicht guht umbgehen . . . dieses wierdt Ihnen weißen das Ihr her sein wollen und sie wasallen sein müßen und nicht condohminaht haben müssen.* Whole text in Dietrich (1981: 100–24); quotations at pp. 109–11.

was called the *Indigenat*, the appointment to local administrative posts only of persons native to the territory, and were normally consulted on any such appointment. All those rights were by and large respected by the king, even though in the 1740 address the Minden gentry admonish the king to respect the rights of the estates somewhat more scrupulously with regard to taxation.[286]

Compared with nineteenth-century, let alone twentieth-century bureaucracies the central administration of an *ancien régime* kingdom tended to be minute. True, the kind of abstract discussion of the evolution and tasks of the various branches of the administration of Brandenburg-Prussia provided by historians tends to project the image of a purposeful, fairly complex machinery. But what was the reality on the ground? King Frederic II for years was barely on speaking terms with the president of the Brandenburg demesne chamber, Carl Ludwig von Siegroth (in office 1766–82), but did not remove him. Things got off to an inauspicious start when Siegroth, freshly appointed, complained to the king that working conditions for the chamber, housed in the Berlin royal palace, were impossible. Siegroth found that it was

> restricted to single room . . . where the requisite conferences and committee meetings of different departments are held simultaneously. . . . Despite the fact that unnecessary papers have previously been removed . . . the registry, which concerning demesne affairs also includes the archive, is now so full of indispensable dossiers and documents that for lack of space nothing can be separated properly, and the most important things thus often take several days to find, and sometimes cannot be found at all.

Siegroth also observed that the 'chief tax office' (*Ober Steuer Casse*) likewise disposed only of a single room, so small that the staff did not know where to put the 'money chests'. Siegroth asked for at least one additional room—which, out of a total of some 1,200 which the royal palace (demolished in 1950) is said to have contained, should not have been all that difficult to find. But in his reply Frederic acerbically informed Siegroth that

> I cannot possibly give over the entire palace to serve as chancery [office space] for the chamber. You just have to examine the papers properly, and put aside any unnecessary stuff and have it burned, and then the present storage containers will no doubt be more than sufficient for what remains.[287]

Frederic II 'the Great' is an icon of 'Prussia', a name itself associated by popular cliché with discipline and efficiency. Treating eighteenth-century 'Prussia' as a 'great power', conventional historiography lets us imagine Frederic as served by a well-oiled governmental machinery worthy of such a successful 'state'. Though anecdotal, the exchange between Siegroth and Frederic should at least warn us not to assume too much in this respect. It is striking that the 'chief tax office' mentioned by Siegroth apparently handled payments in the shape of actual coins, when one would expect

[286] On Minden Spannagel (1894) (with a detailed review of the 'quarter' issue on pp. 92–7) and Nordsiek (1986); on Halberstadt Wagner (1905).

[287] [*daß*] *Ich ohnmöglich das ganze Schlos zur Kammer-Kanzeley einräumen kann. Ihr müsset nur die Papiere ordentlich nachsehen, und alles unnüze Zeug separiren und verbrennen lassen, da dann zu dem Überrest die jezige Behältniße gewis überflüssig hinlänglich seyn werden.* Quoted Neugebauer (2000: 110, 112).

the central administration to deal only in more abstract transactions. Were we to become curious what the coins in those 'money chests' may have looked like, we would find that eighteenth-century 'Prussia' had neither a currency of its own nor a single currency. The basic currency unit was the *Reichstaler*, common to the Holy Roman Empire (but used beyond—indeed the word *Taler* became 'dollar' in English). Thus the Berlin mint—identified by a small capital 'A' on the coins—under Frederic II emitted silver coins with the bust of the king and the legend FRIDERICVS BORVSSORVM REX, 'Frederic King of the Prussians', and on the reverse the Brandenburg eagle with the legend EIN REICHS THALER (the specimen to which I refer bears the date 1765). The prefix *Reichs-* in eighteenth-century German unambiguously refers to the Holy Roman Empire: no pretence of a separate currency here. Moreover, the way the *Taler*—spelled nowadays without the h—was divided varied between dominions, as did the coins circulating there (many of those dominions had their own mint). In the margraviate of Brandenburg the *Taler* corresponded to twenty-four *Groschen* of twelve *Pfennige* each, in Prussia proper to ninety *Groschen* of three *Schillinge* each, in the Rhenish dominions to sixty *Stüber* of eight *Deut* each, and so forth, evidently reflecting local traditions. A unified system was not introduced until 1821; it was still based on the old *Reichstaler*.

But we should go further and ask why it was that Frederic could be so nonchalant: if the system, somehow, worked when a present-day state, in similar conditions, would not, what was it that made it different from a present-day state? The royal administration did not take up much space because it was in part decentralized (with, for example, not just one demesne chamber but several and only a minimum of central oversight); much of the work that the demesne administration might have done itself was actually left to lessees, who rented the royal estates; and what was not part of the demesne largely ran itself, rather impervious to, but also un-requiring of, any input from the central power. The last point may be the most important: whereas in a present-day state the central government has equal responsibility for, and concomitantly equal power over, the entire territory, that was far from the case in the *ancien régime*.

Cartographic representation of *ancien régime* political geography is often only possible at the price of radical simplification that presses period phenomena into the mould of present-day concepts of social and political structures (it may be significant that *ancien régime* mapmakers on the whole did not colour in territory but only marked its limits in colour). Thus, whereas on a present-day historical map the margraviate of Brandenburg will appear as a homogeneously coloured territory, it would in fact look like a Swiss cheese if the demesne were distinguished from local lordships not held by the elector/king. Efforts by the Berlin government to bring the lordships of the margraviate under tighter control persistently failed even in the eighteenth century.[288] In 1805, the margraviate of Brandenburg still had 589 local law courts outside the royal demesne, corresponding to as many lordships in which the king, far from being 'sovereign', had no automatic jurisdiction—but neither did the central power have to invest any resources to keep them functioning.[289]

[288] Marquardt (1999: 198, 416–17).

[289] Neugebauer (2000: 154). Neugebauer believes that in the 18th cent. the only function of those courts was the authentification of legal acts, of wills, damage estimates, or property inventories. I suspect that this impression results from the nature of the archival material: the sort of activity cited indispensably requires written records. It was perfectly normal for such courts *not* to keep written records of their

It was lords who, in the pre-Reformation period, had succeeded in collecting for their dynasty a great many local lordships—by means of grants by the crown, purchase, marriage, and inheritance—who became estates of the empire, represented in the *Reichstag*. When the constitution of the empire was remodelled in the late fifteenth/early sixteenth century, many of the lesser lords placed themselves under the protection of those greater lords (princes)—with whom often they would have had ties of vassalage already before. For this protection (or promotion of their interests) they were willing to pay the princes, beyond their dues to the empire of which those princes came to be agents of collection, too. But the submission of the lesser lords to the princes was never total. The princes were not at liberty to impose decisions, or taxes, on them without hearing them: just as the princes (together with the imperial free cities) became the estates of the empire, assembled in the *Reichstag* (the diet of the empire), so the lesser lords, and the lesser towns, became the estates of the dominions of the princes, assembled in a *Landtag* (a diet of the land or territory).

After 1653, in the margraviate of Brandenburg the estates usually only convened in plenary session to do homage to a new ruler on his accession—although in 1696 they were called to vote 'extraordinary funds' for the elector. This was an exception in the sense that otherwise, in the second half of the seventeenth century and in the eighteenth century, the elector/king did not ask them to vote any new taxes in addition to those traditionally established. This used to be seen as a disempowerment of the estates. More recently it has been interpreted more as a surrender, born from the calculation that the possible increase in revenue that the estates might be prevailed on to grant was not worth the kind of hassle that, for decades on end, rocked the neighbouring duchy of Mecklenburg in that period. (In Mecklenburg, continual, bitter altercations between the *Landtag* and successive dukes involved numerous lawsuits brought against those dukes by the Mecklenburg estates before the Aulic Council in Vienna, culminating in the deposition of one duke of Mecklenburg by the emperor in 1728, and ending with a complete victory of the estates in 1755. The duchy of Württemberg presents a similar case.) In any case, the Brandenburg estates continued to form permanent committees and to meet locally, with each *Kreis* or district having its own *Kreistag*.[290]

Local lordships in Germany usually comprised a number of adjacent villages (but might also include small towns). The lord might reside in the lordship, or be represented by a steward; the latter was usually the case if the 'lord' was actually an institution, such as a monastery, or if he was a prince. The lord was powerful, but no more than the king in his kingdom could he treat his 'subjects', the population of the lordship, as he liked. He was supposed to protect and represent the inhabitants of his lordship and in return obtained a substantial part of the revenue that they generated—in the form of money, produce, and services. Assemblies of the peasants—themselves no homogeneous group but a strongly hierarchical one, with the holders of certain specified farmsteads the most powerful—met routinely and could not be ignored by the lord. He had both privileges and duties, as did everybody else. Farmsteads were considered the property of the families

ordinary proceedings. This matter seems not to have been researched for Brandenburg, but it has for Austria *ob der Enns* (west of the river Enns): there, in the late 18th cent. all local courts in lordships held by the church kept written records, but only 28 per cent of lordships in secular tenure (Marquardt 1999: 167).

[290] Neugebauer (2000: 86–9).

(in the sense both of living relatives and of heirs yet unborn) of the individual peasants, who could not sell their plots. With the permission of the lord, they could usually leave, but had to pay the lord an indemnity (fixed by local customary law), as might peasants who wished to take their place. The lord could not, however, dispossess them, at least not by legal means. He could sell the lordship (if he had the consent of all his living agnatic relatives), but only in one piece, not in part; similarly, if the lord had several heirs they had to run the lordship jointly. Since it did not constitute private property (of which the owner can dispose freely), it would not be quite right to describe the lord as a landowner.[291]

Not the least important function of the local lord was that of judge: he presided over the law court that, in every lordship, met regularly to adjudicate conflicts among the inhabitants. Frequently, from at least the sixteenth century onwards, a lordship would have its customary law codified in writing. The lord (or his representative) directed the proceedings, but did not deliver verdicts; this was invariably done by jurors selected from among the peasants. The jurisdiction of the lord was not delegated by the local prince, who throughout the *ancien régime*, and no matter how powerful he was, had no jurisdiction in local lordships within his dominions yet outside his demesne (i.e. in local lordships where the local lord was someone other than himself). Thus, the prince could not have people arrested in lordships outside his demesne except with the consent of the lord. A local lord usually could not hear cases involving a crime punishable by death; for this it was necessary to turn to the nearest local lord who had capital jurisdiction. Throughout the Holy Roman Empire and until the end of the eighteenth century, this was always held from the emperor, never from the local prince. In practice, the nearest lord with capital jurisdiction might well *be* the local prince—but it need not be. The nearest appellate court was also normally one set up by the local prince. However, it was usually possible ultimately to appeal beyond the prince to the Imperial Aulic Council or the Imperial Cameral Tribunal, as frequently happened.

There is a popular perception of *ancien régime* peasants as little more than slaves who laboured under constant oppression, and exploitation, by their lord. If we bear in mind (we shall return to this presently) that a kingdom or principality even of the late *ancien régime* functioned essentially without a police force, it is immediately apparent that this would not in fact have worked. The peasants were many, the lord was one: why should they have obeyed him? Because the lord was backed by the prince and his army? But normally he was not, and did not want to be (nor, in fact, did the average German prince even have a standing army before the eighteenth century). A typical, non-princely, local lord in *ancien régime* Germany was both attracted by the princely court and wary of any intervention by the prince in the affairs of his own lordship. That being so, the last thing that he would have wanted to depend on was armed support by the prince. Many a lordship in fact had a militia—but it was made up of the peasants themselves, to deter marauders, bandits, itinerants, and it could not, of course, be used against the inhabitants. One major reason why peasants obeyed the lord was that they considered him legitimate—the same, and probably the most important reason, why people obeyed, or at least respected, the crown.

[291] On the problem of 'property' in and of the local lordships, see Marquardt (1999: ch. 2). Marquardt offers a wealth of information on local lordships in Germany.

In his impressive case study of one fairly large local lordship in Upper Swabia, that of the abbey of Ottobeuren, from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, Govind Sreenivasan notes that although the power of a local lord

could be focused in particular instances to collect a tax or punish a malefactor, it was never a continuous presence in the villages and was rarely successful in shaping the actual behavior of the subjects. The reason for this impotence is perfectly straightforward: an adequate coercive apparatus simply did not exist . . . At Ottobeuren, for example, the monks could only count on their *Vogt* [bailiff], a single local noble who arranged for peasant compliance with the monastery's decrees when the moral authority of the Abbot was insufficiently persuasive. Beyond the *Vogt*, the monastery was dependent upon the admonitions of the parish priest, a clutch of scribes and administrators, and a dozen poorly paid *Pittel* [the word, normally spelled *Büttel* in present-day German, is a cognate of the English 'bedel'], or sheriffs, to maintain order among thousands of stubborn, well-armed, and litigious peasants. For almost all of his subjects the Abbot's authority was thus an episodic and often reactive intrusion into their lives.[292]

Mutatis mutandis, this analysis in fact aptly describes the situation of *ancien régime* lordship on any level—including that of the kingdom itself.

But if there were limitations on how far the monks could coerce the peasants, there were also limitations on how far the peasants could, or even wanted to, weaken their overlord. The enhanced property rights secured over the course of the fifteenth century now gave the peasants a considerable investment in the lordship of the monastery as the most effective guarantor of those rights. . . . Major confrontations between the monastery and its subjects therefore almost always took the form of negotiations. Violent rebellion was rare.

All this again aptly describes the essence of relations even between an *ancien régime* crown and those placed under it: the crown, too, was important to the subjects as a guarantor of privileges and property rights. Sreenivasan continues:

Moreover, by the early 1500s, a century's experience of blustering and haggling had established a familiar and reliable formula for peasant negotiation with the monastery. Grievances which the monastery refused to redress were regularly appealed to a higher authority, usually the Holy Roman Emperor [presumably via the Imperial Aulic Council]. The Emperor would then commission some prominent authority [some other local abbot, bishop, or nobleman] as a mediator. Mediation invariably forced the monastery to disgorge at least some concessions, while preserving its essential prerogatives intact.[293]

In the chapter from which I have been quoting, Sreenivasan is speaking about the sixteenth century, but he also notes that 'the structure of late medieval Swabian lordship [remained] unchanged in its essentials from the close of the fifteenth century to the Napoleonic era.'[294] He is mainly concerned with the social and economic history of the local peasantry and less with the legal and political history of the lordship as such: in his book, the legal-political set-up of the lordship is not traced through time in any detail. If

[292]Sreenivasan (2004: 30). According to the monks' website, until 1802 the lordship of the abbey comprised twenty-seven villages besides Ottobeuren itself (www.abtei-ottobeuren.de/kloster/geschichte.html, last accessed October 2006).

[293]Sreenivasan (2004: 35).

[294]Sreenivasan (2004: 37).

the focus had been different, I suspect that even on the local level the same trends would have shown up as in *ancien régime* history in general, with the lord gaining in stature and the peasants, by the eighteenth century, probably no longer armed (though no doubt no less litigious and prone to go to court over their rights), in a development paralleling the cessation of feuds among nobles. But all those trends occurred without any change in the coercive power of those concerned and as a result, basically, of cultural change. Nor—Sreenivasan is right to emphasize—did they alter the 'essentials' of the 'structure of lordship'. Those remained the same both throughout the late *ancien régime*, and from one region to the next.

The deteriorating position of the peasantry, from the sixteenth century onwards, in Poland and Russia is often emphasized. I lack the knowledge of the history of that part of Europe to venture an opinion on this issue. I do confess to some scepticism concerning the usual grim (if mostly rather sweeping and abstract) depictions of serfs ruthlessly exploited by their noble masters, because similar depictions are found also concerning the situation in France or Germany, where they have a way of proving inapplicable as soon as one takes a look at concrete local evidence. Concerning Germany itself, one will often come across a supposed distinction between a more liberal form of lordship in the west and a more oppressive form east of the river Elbe. Bernd Marquardt argues that this distinction, too, is both an oversimplification—with elements of the alleged 'eastern' model found in the west and vice versa—and an exaggeration in that the 'eastern' model was less different from the western, and less oppressive, than is usually alleged.

For what it is worth, prima facie visual evidence would not appear to support the notion of 'east-Elbian' local lords successfully squeezing wealth from their peasants: though elegant, the country seats that the Brandenburg gentry built for themselves in the eighteenth century are invariably rather modest, and the same is true of Mecklenburg and Pomerania. Had their owners been the profit-seeking 'agro-capitalists' as which they are often depicted, and which some of their successors in the nineteenth century may have become, they should have been rich. Yet in the late *ancien régime*, their main economic characteristic was debt: thus, in 1806, the local lordships of the Neumark carried an average debt of 106 per cent of their estimated value.[295] Compare, by way of contrast, the grandiose scale on which, in the eighteenth century, the monks of Ottobeuren rebuilt their monastery in exquisite baroque style (it has been dubbed the 'Swabian Escorial')—and they probably could not even go into debt, owing to the constraints of canon law. Nor, as Sreenivasan shows, was the level of agricultural productivity attained in this lordship ever impressive. He does, however, demonstrate that, by the eighteenth century, its economy was markedly more monetized and market-oriented than in the late pre-Reformation period.

In our society, it seems very important to keep authorities apart: separating them in a clear hierarchy (eliminating ambiguity as to who is subordinate to whom) and separating them both with regard to their functions and spatially, with each assigned its own exclusive geographical sphere of influence. This latter aspect has been identified by John Ruggie as '[t]he central attribute of modernity in international politics'. Ruggie opposes this 'peculiar and historically unique configuration of territorial space' to

[295] Marquardt (1999: 262); on the character of the lordships east of the Elbe in general see ibid. 258–63.

medieval Europe, with its 'patchwork of overlapping and incomplete rights of government,' which were 'inextricably superimposed and tangled,' and in which 'different juridical instances were geographically interwoven and stratified, and plural allegiances, asymmetrical suzerainties and anomalous enclaves abounded.' The difference between the medieval and modern worlds is striking in this respect.[296]

However, contrary to a common perception, the 'territorial state' was not invented in the fifteenth or sixteenth century, or enshrined by the Peace of Westphalia. What Ruggie calls 'modernity in international relations' did not start until the French Revolution: eighteenth-century 'Prussia', or any other kingdom of the period, still conformed to the 'medieval', not the 'modern' type as distinguished by Ruggie.

The king of Prussia was in a somewhat special position in that, with regard to almost all his dominions, he had the emperor 'above' him and in those dominions thus was not 'sovereign'. True: the emperor could not dictate to the king. But that does not mean that the suzerainty that he embodied was purely notional. The Minden canons appealing to an imperial court failed, but even so the episode is significant. More importantly, if less visibly, the king was bound by the legal framework of the empire. He could not, for example, alter the biconfessional set-up of the Minden chapter, or touch any of the other ecclesiastical institutions in this or his other dominions, protected as they were by the 1648 peace settlement that, considered part of the constitutional law of the empire, in eighteenth century Germany was treated as pretty much sacrosanct. 'Concerning the catholic religion', Frederic William of Prussia notes matter-of-factly in the 1722 instruction for his successor, 'you must tolerate it to the extent made necessary by the Peace of Westphalia.'[297]

More typically—in the sense that this was a situation found throughout Europe, not just in the empire—the king had no uniform jurisdiction in his dominions, but had by and large to respect established rights and structures. He could try to work around them. For example, not calling the Brandenburg estates meant that the elector/king did not have to face their joint opposition. Yet in addition to foregoing a potential source of revenue (in the shape of extra taxes that the estates might have voted), this failure to engage them also meant that for all the high-sounding edicts addressed to them from Berlin the Brandenburg local lordships were among the most autonomous and self-contained in Germany. Territorially, they were effectively enclaves—or rather, it was the lordships forming part of the princely demesne that were enclaves (around 1800, perhaps one-third of the total number of farmsteads in the margraviate belonged to the demesne).[298] Elsewhere, the demesne chamber system established in 1723 tended to supersede older, more locally rooted governmental structures, notably the *Regierungen*. But it is significant that those older structures were not simply abolished. They continued to exist side by side with the more 'modern' structures and had to be left, or found, something to do (as law courts, overseeing religious and educational matters, etc.).

Fundamentally, eighteenth-century Brandenburg-Prussia was not, like a present-day state, built on the notion of uniform jurisdiction of a 'sovereign' over the entirety of a given territory. The position of the ruler did not consist in exclusive control of a bounded

[296] Ruggie (1993: 144, 149–50) (quoting Joseph R. Strayer and Dana C. Munro in the first instance and Perry Anderson in the other two).

[297] *Was die Kattolische Religion anlanget müßet Ihr sie tollerieren soweit als der westfehlische fride mit sich bringet.* Dietrich (1981: 115).

[298] Neugebauer (2000: 96).

territory. Rather, as in the pre-Reformation period, it was essentially a bundle of rights and privileges, shot through with rights and privileges of other actors below the crown and even, in this instance, above it (owing to the dominions of this particular crown mostly forming part of the Holy Roman Empire). Rights could overlap in a way purely territorial jurisdiction could not, and they did. The inventory of the endowment of the Minden chapter drawn up for king Frederic William in 1721 indicates that some 18 per cent of the revenue of the canons came from outside the Minden territory. Since that revenue did not result from private property but from lordly rights, this means that a number of lordships, or rights therein, were controlled from Minden even though they were situated in the dominions of other princes (or, conceivably, other dominions of the king of Prussia).[299] Tellingly, the border of the Minden territory itself was not linear. There were many small bits and pieces of Minden territory beyond the main border, and likewise bits and pieces of 'foreign' territory situated within the border.[300]

That political power even in the eighteenth century was not predicated on exclusive control of territory is shown particularly well by the fairly frequent phenomenon of shared or joint lordship (*Samtherrschaft* in German), which tended to arise in areas where, in the pre-Reformation era, powerful local actors had clashed and compromised. Thus the elector/king of Brandenburg-Prussia had inherited, together with the duchy of Cleves, a joint lordship (established in 1445) over the town of Lippstadt in Westphalia, shared with the count of Lippe and which continued until 1850. In a twist entirely typical of *ancien régime* political geography, the territory of the town was contiguous neither with the duchy nor with the main territory of the count—although the latter also ruled, on his own, a sliver of territory (around Lipperode) that *was* contiguous with the joint lordship. Another, particularly interesting example is furnished by the largish lordship named after the castle of Tomburg in the Rhineland (south-west of Bonn), whose peculiar set-up reflects the intense rivalry of the duke of Jülich and the archbishop of Cologne in the late pre-Reformation period. In the late eighteenth century, this lordship was jointly held by the Elector-Palatine (in his capacity as duke of Jülich) and one baron von Dalwigk-Lichtenfels, a local gentleman presumably not personally acquainted with the elector (who resided in Munich after he also became elector of Bavaria in 1778). If this still sounds innocuous enough, the picture gets more complicated—but instructively so—if we increase the magnification.

The Tomburg lordship itself was not a unitary entity but a compound consisting of the lordship of Flamersheim (with three parishes), the lordship of Hilberath (two-and-a-half parishes), the lordship of Odendorf (three parishes), the lordship of Ollheim (one parish), the lordship of Oberdrees (one parish), and the lordship of Winterburg (one parish), plus land (e.g. woodland) outside any of the parishes. This whole was not divided up equally: the duke of Jülich (i.e. in the late eighteenth century, the elector of Bavaria) held one third of it, while the baron held the remainder from the archbishop-elector of Cologne. However, there was no line dividing up the territory. One reason why this would have been difficult—had the idea even arisen—was that in a deviation from the general arrangement the two parties each had an equal share in the lordship of Flamersheim and in the lordship of Hilberath. But we saw that, in fact, they only had two-*and-a-half* of the

[299] Spannagel (1894: 94). Rights held by the canons outside Minden must have been the most difficult to find out about, so the figure of 18 per cent is in fact likely to be too low.

[300] Nordsiek (1986: 31–4).

Hilberath parishes: whereas one half of the parish of Oberkastenholz belonged to them, the other half belonged to the abbey of Kornelimünster (near Aachen), which also held all of the neighbouring parish of Niederkastenholz. Moreover, the lordship of Winterburg had a lord of its own, apparently a vassal of the duke/elector. Evidently, the combined revenue accruing to the lord in each subunit of the Tomburg lordship was divided up pro rata between the duke/elector and the baron, even though the territory was not and could not be. Each subunit apparently had its own law court (though some of them perhaps held joint sessions in practice). Notwithstanding the fact that a two-thirds share of the fief as a whole was held from the archbishop-elector of Cologne, appeals from any court within this fief would be lodged with a superior court in nearby Euskirchen, situated in the duchy of Jülich.[301]

An example of this kind of phenomenon still survives in the Netherlands. The southern Netherlands (with Brussels as capital) had been separated from the northern Netherlands as a result of the latter's secession from the Spanish crown in the sixteenth century. Held by the Habsburg dynasty until the French Revolution, at the Congress of Vienna in 1815 those southern provinces were reunited with the northern Netherlands, which at this time became the Kingdom of the Netherlands. In 1830, the southern Netherlands rebelled and became independent as the Kingdom of Belgium, so a border reappeared between the southern and the northern Netherlands. With the *ancien régime* gone and the new territorial state triumphant, this had to be linear border. It proved difficult, and, in one section, the village of Baarle, impossible to work out: concerning Baarle, the only solution that the members of the commission in charge of establishing the demarcation line were able to agree on was to leave things essentially as they had been in the *ancien régime*.

The problem was that in the *ancien régime* Baarle was divided. Part of it belonged to the lordship of Breda, which in 1403 was acquired—married, in effect—by one count of Nassau, ancestor of the present-day Dutch royal house. The rest of the village belonged to the duke of Brabant. The lordship of Breda was actually part of the duchy of Brabant, too; the difference was that in 'his' part of the village the duke of Brabant himself was the suzerain *and* the local lord (it was part of his demesne), whereas in the part that belonged to the count of Nassau the duke was only the suzerain, not the local lord. Unfortunately, the village was not divided neatly down the middle. To the chagrin of the nineteenth-century demarcation commission, houses assigned to one or the other lord turned out to be distributed in such a way that no line could be drawn between them. Within the area of the village, there are now some thirty territorial enclaves. As the place is surrounded by territory belonging to the Kingdom of the Netherlands, more of those enclaves belong to Belgium than the other way around, but the fact that about a quarter are actually Dutch enclaves makes clear the degree of topographical intricacy that the commissioners were up against. One suspects that nationalist sentiment on the part of the commissioners and obstinacy on the part of the locals prevented a more 'rational' compromise (the locals last vetoed efforts to 'tidy up' the situation in the 1990s).

Administratively Baarle is not one village but two—there is Baarle-Nassau, which is part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and Baarle-Hertog (Duke's Baarle), which is part of the Kingdom of Belgium. On the ground, however, the visitor will find only a

[301] On the Tomburg lordship Pesch (1901); on the evolution of the territorial situation in the Jülich-Cologne border zone Kreiner (1996: 79–83).

single, large village, some kilometres north of the main (linear) border separating the two countries. Only close inspection will reveal that many of its houses are actually part of Belgium: the little plaques bearing their number sport the respective national flags. Shops in houses belonging to Belgium will be open on Sundays, but not shops in Dutch houses. Although this sounds complicated, in practice it seems to work smoothly—suggesting that people in the *ancien régime* had no difficulty with this kind of arrangement either.[302]

4.4.2 France in the *ancien régime*

Most *ancien régime* lordships, on any level, were composite lordships. On the macro level, the Spanish monarchy, in the seventeenth century the largest in Europe, is a good example: according to the Spanish ambassador to the French court, in 1700 it consisted of no less than twenty-two separate kingdoms; and the Spanish king held many more lordships (such as the duchy of Brabant) which, however loosely, were part of the Holy Roman Empire.[303] Even the French crown, domestically powerful (by *ancien régime* standards) as it was, nevertheless proved incapable of administratively unifying its realm. Its control of French society was too precarious to allow it to shape that society deliberately.

Both the power of the crown and its glaring limitations are well illustrated by the salt tax (*gabelle*), which was given a decisive boost in the mid-fourteenth century by the need to raise the enormous ransom demanded by the English crown for the release of king John II. In the post-Reformation period, the *gabelle* obliged the inhabitants of many parts of the kingdom to buy salt from the royal salt depots at an artificially high price. This could only work because the crown was able to exercise a degree of (mildly) coercive control over many of its subjects. But even in the late eighteenth century, the salt tax was not the same throughout the kingdom—far from it. The result not of rational design but of path-dependent piecemeal accretion, by this stage the system had become utterly absurd, but at least it was traditional and established. The crown could not abolish it, because it depended on the money; and it could not reform the system (even though that would have left both it *and* the subjects richer) because it lacked the power.

In the *pays* (plural!) *de grande gabelle*—north-western and central France with the Île-de-France and Burgundy—the salt tax was high. The price of salt was fixed by the authorities on the basis of a somewhat notional cost of production, calculated separately for each tax district and influenced by factors like the distance of a given district from the place of production, the modalities of transport, and tolls payable en route. The tax farmers were exempted from such tolls if they were levied by the crown, but even in eighteenth-century France tolls were also levied by some towns and lords. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the *grande gabelle* made salt about ten times more expensive than the cost of production as determined by the authorities, but in the course of the eighteenth century it underwent further increases.

In most districts—those situated at the interior of the *pays de grande gabelle*—all heads of households were obliged to buy a minimum quantity of salt annually. But in districts bordering on territory where the price of salt was lower, and where cheap

[302] The two municipalities now have a common website, though with two addresses (www.baarle-hertog.be and www.baarle-nassau.nl; last accessed October 2006). This features a street plan (*stratenplan*) showing the various enclaves within the village.

[303] Cf. Osiander (1994: 103–4).

smuggled salt was a correspondingly greater problem, an annual minimum quantity of salt had to be bought from the crown by each parish as a whole. Each parish would annually designate someone from its midst—excluding nobility and clergy—who had to come up with the money for the salt for the whole parish and prevail on the locals to repay him, in doing which he could not count on enforcement by the crown. In fairness it has to be said that this financially responsible person was remunerated, but if he defaulted, his movable goods would be confiscated and sold; if this did not yield enough money, the parish as a whole—again excluding nobility and clergy—was held answerable. (Probably in order to ease the financial pressure on this person, parishes would buy their annual salt in four instalments; they had to come and get it from the royal depots and organize the distribution themselves.) This was a way of passing on to private individuals the burden of administering a system that the crown simply did not have the resources to administer itself; a similar method was used for other kinds of taxes.

In every case the salt in question was only to be used as table salt, and this was, in theory, controlled by the authorities. Salt fed to animals, or used for pickling, had to be purchased additionally (and the purpose for which it was purchased declared) at a slightly lower price; table salt could be 'rededicated' for some other purpose only in certain conditions and with the express approval of the authorities. The *grande gabelle* was thus distinguished from an ordinary indirect tax in that consumers were not free to decide how much of the product they wanted to buy. The advantage for the crown was that the amount of revenue from this tax could thus be calculated in advance. Moreover, if the mandatory quantity of salt that households or parishes had to buy was ample, this was also to discourage the purchase of cheap smuggled salt. That at least was the idea. In practice, the system always worked badly.

In the *pays* (plural) *de petite gabelle* (south-eastern France) the salt tax was lower and there was no mandatory minimum quantity. Inspectors would, however, call on households to check certificates proving the provenance of their salt, in order to clamp down on smuggled salt. In some areas where salt was actually produced, the salt tax was still lower (eastern France: here the *gabelle de salines* was paid) or was not paid at all. This was the case of northernmost France, Britanny, and the south-west, which in part had never been subject to this tax (the *pays exempts*) or had at some point redeemed it once and for all (the *pays rédimés*). The *pays* (singular) *de quart-bouillon* on the coast of Normandy, where salt was produced (by boiling), originally paid the crown a quarter of its output (hence the name), but by the seventeenth century this tax originally payable in kind had been replaced by a monetary payment that in fact amounted to more than half of the value of the salt produced. Here as everywhere else in France the production of salt was in private hands, but, in theory, strictly controlled by the crown.

In a border zone of between 2 and 5 French miles (1 French mile corresponded to 2.5 English miles, or 4 km) between the *pays de grande gabelle* and areas where no salt tax was paid, but on the side of the former, it was only possible to buy the quantity of salt that one would be expected to need for six months, and proof of local residency—furnished by the vicar—was required. The idea, again, was to keep surplus salt away from areas from where it could easily have been smuggled into the *pays de grande gabelle*. Consumers complained that the maximum quantity that they were allowed to buy tended to be less than what they needed for six months.

Exceptions from the general system abounded. Paris, Versailles, and Burgundy paid the *grande gabelle*, but were exempt from the mandatory minimum quantity, as, in the eighteenth century, were those who according to the local tax registers had less than a certain minimum wealth. People in this latter category could buy their salt from retailers called the *regrattiers*. Licensed by the royal salt depots, the *regrattiers* had to buy their merchandise from those depots at the normal price, and thus to sell it at a higher price; as a result, the only advantage for the less well-off of buying from the *regrattiers* was that they could buy less salt. Anyway, this was only possible where the mandatory minimum was imposed on individual households; in districts where it was imposed on whole parishes the tax inspectors were, on the contrary, expected to see to it that even those too poor to pay other taxes did buy some of the parish salt.

Within the *pays de grande gabelle*, numerous towns or parishes paid a special reduced rate for their salt as a privilege. The nobility and clergy also paid a reduced rate and were exempted from the minimum quantity. Then there were those enjoying what was called the *privilège de franc-salé*, which, however, meant different things for different people and in different places. Certain high officials were only charged the 'market price' (*prix marchand*) for their salt. Of course, as there was in fact no (legal) free market, this was a notional concept, calculated by the authorities for each tax district. If such officials bought *less* salt than they were entitled to, a proportional sum was actually paid out to them. A few officials (governors of provinces and *états-majors de places*, i.e. officers in charge of fortresses) got their salt for free, as did hospitals and two mendicant religious orders. Certain municipalities, lords, or indeed private individuals were entitled to cheaper salt because they had ceded to the crown certain tolls that they had previously levied. Finally, cheap salt was also sold to the army.[304]

The system was not efficient; it could not be. Revenue was produced: in 1646 the tax farmers paid the crown some 13 million *livres*, in 1681 24 million, in 1785 58.5 million (in every case, for a five-year-period). The tax farmers were not free to determine the prices that they charged consumers. The advantage to the crown of farming out the tax—to the extent that there actually was one—was that it obtained the entire tax revenue in advance; the tax farmers for their part formed consortia and indebted themselves to raise the money. But despite the risk of heavy punishment much of the salt actually consumed was untaxed even where this was illegal. Although they are the delight of present-day genealogists, the salt tax registers or *sextés* were evidently often incomplete, and the sale of black-market salt (an activity known as *faux-saunage*) has even been called 'the [!] great national industry' of late *ancien régime* France by Marcel Marion. It was practised by many and various people, including employees of the tax farmers. In the late eighteenth century we hear of near-daily violent clashes between salt smugglers (operating in gangs up to three or four hundred strong, even if they were mostly much smaller) and the enforcement staff of the tax farmers. Even the army would sometimes be involved.[305]

The profit for the crown was substantial, the lack of cooperation on the part of the subjects, typical. Pierre Goubert cites the historian Ernest Lavisse as saying that

[304] On the *gabelle*, see Esmein (1912: 638–42); Marion (1923: 247–50); Mousnier (1992: 413–15); Pasquier (1905). On some aspects, those authors give contradictory information; in case of doubt I have followed Pasquier as the most detailed source.

[305] Pasquier (1905: 108–33); Marion (1923: 249).

French 'absolutism' was tempered by disobedience; and observes that in many places the opposite may well have been closer to the truth. He points out that Louis XIV disposed of a total of some 2,000 *gendarmes* (constables) for his entire kingdom. In his view, what is astonishing is not the anarchy found at every turn in late *ancien régime* France, but the fact that, despite totally insufficient means of coercion at the disposal of the crown, the system actually worked at all, however badly.[306]

The French army, which in wartime would be several hundred thousand strong, was employed only rarely to police the kingdom. The desertion rate was high at the best of times, and letting the soldiers roam the French countryside in the absence of any threat to them (other than that posed by their superiors) no doubt only made it worse; moreover, the fact that soldiers often practised *faux-saunage* themselves made them still less suited to clamp down on this particular abuse. There were, to be sure, forces of order besides the royal *gendarmes*. The administration of the royal tax monopoly had a staff of some 18,000 helpers anachronistically known as *archers* (archers) or as *gardes* (guards). They worked for the tax farmers to ensure compliance with *gabelle* regulations, but at least some of them swore an oath to the crown, and in that sense were not just private employees. The relevant royal *ordonnance* of 1680 laid down that *gardes* should (*seront tenus à*) wear shoulder straps (*bandoulières*) with the royal arms, but the phrasing suggests that this was not always the case.[307] There were no uniforms. Clearly not many people wanted this kind of job, with the *gardes* neither popular nor respected. Applicants appear to have come from the lowest, least privileged strata of the population. Of course, 18,000 men for the whole kingdom were far too little to ensure a reasonable degree of compliance. The 1784 *Encyclopédie méthodique: Finances* gives that number, scoffing that 18,000 people were 'busy making war on twenty-two million inhabitants' of the kingdom.[308]

It seems unlikely that the number of *gardes* would have been higher in previous decades—if anything it must have gone up not down. In fact, what is unusual for *ancien régime* Europe is not that the French crown disposed of insufficient enforcement personnel but that it disposed of such personnel at all. We talk about 'absolutism' and imagine powerful princes, more often than not busy oppressing their subjects. In fact, those princes did not usually have much personnel to do any oppressing with—they would be reluctant to rely on their army for this for the same reason that the French crown hesitated to let its soldiers out of their barracks except for foreign campaigns. In eighteenth-century London, it was up to the parishes and other local corporations to maintain constables, described by an expert on the period as 'a chaotic assortment . . . most of them of less than doubtful efficiency'. In *ancien régime* Spain, fighting crime was the task of local militias (with their own tribunals) known as 'brotherhoods' (*hermandades*). Notorious for their corruption, they effectively ceased to operate in the Napoleonic period, though they were not formally abolished until 1835.[309]

The number of royal *gendarmes* in France grew in the eighteenth century: in the 1780s, there were a little under 3,900 in the whole kingdom, and on the very eve of the revolution the number was raised to 5,000. Until 1720, they were organized in local

[306] Goubert (1993: 80–1, 126–7, 345).

[307] On the 1680 *ordonnance* Pasquier (1905: 58).

[308] Pasquier (1905: 115) cites the '*Encyclopédie méthodique*, tome Ier' without giving a page number or the entry from which the quotation is taken. His bibliography at least leaves no doubt that he is referring to the *Encyclopédie méthodique: Finances*, vol. 1 (Paris 1784).

[309] Anderson (1993: 128).

'companies' (*compagnies*) that often were very small; thereafter those were replaced by larger 'companies', one for each of the administrative districts known as *généralités*. They received orders from the crown or its local representatives, but also from the *parlements*—which were not organs of the crown. Paris, with, in the 1780s, perhaps 700,000 inhabitants, had some 1,500 law enforcement officials of various kinds, about one for every 470 people; this was a very high density for the period. Chartres with about 15,000 inhabitants had six law enforcement officials (one for every 2,500 people). Bordeaux (on the size of whose population in the eighteenth century I have found no data, but which was surely rather larger than Chartres) had seventy law enforcement officials around 1750, thirty of them mounted. But they belonged to the town watch (*guet*) organized by the municipality, not the crown. Indeed, the royal *gendarmes* and local militias of this kind were often on bad terms rather than cooperating.[310]

Maybe in the case of Bordeaux this had something to do with the fact that the town watch worked well, whereas the *maréchaussée* (to which the *gendarmes* belonged) even after 1720 worked so badly that one cannot help wondering what it was good for. It is hard to escape the impression that it was essentially a façade, a symbol staking a claim even though the institution was unable to live up to that claim other than in the most inchoate fashion. The royal constables were paid very badly (if they were paid at all) and, as a consequence, highly corruptible. Although this was technically prohibited, most had another source of revenue, for example as innkeepers. They could achieve nothing against the will of the local population, only with its support.

> [S]cattering police power over the ground in small, isolated, units was . . . an open invitation to guerilla warfare, and the constables of the maréchaussée met violent resistance whenever they overstepped the bounds of popular tolerance. . . . In situations where the twentieth-century police would have imposed itself with brute force, the eighteenth-century maréchaussée had to temporize or beat an undignified retreat . . . it can be questioned whether the authorities, in spite of sweeping government ordinances, ever conceived of the maréchaussée as the guarantor of public order.[311]

'Intermediary powers' (*pouvoirs intermédiaires*, the expression used by Montesqieu) retaining a certain autonomy from the crown subsisted. There were the *parlements* and the other *cours souveraines* both in the capital and in the provinces. Their political weight was considerable. Throughout the *ancien régime*, the crown had to submit legislation and similar measures, including in particular the annual tax law as well as foreign treaties, to the most important of the *parlements*, the one in Paris, and occasionally (depending on the issues in question) other *cours souveraines* for 'registration' (*enregistrement*) before they came into force. The bodies in question could raise objections and refuse the registration totally or partially, which was a regular occurrence. This obliged the crown to justify its measures; controversial issues provoked a public debate in the form of pamphlets. The crown disposed of means to force registration (*lettre de jussion*, *lit de justice*), but they were not infallible; as a last resort it could decree measures in the form of an *arrêt du conseil*, a decision by the royal council, which did not require registration, rather than as an *ordonnance* or an *édit*.[312]

[310] Anderson (1993: 128) (on the population of Paris see ibid. p. 78); Cameron (1977).
[311] Cameron (1977: 66–7).
[312] On the *enregistrement* Esmein (1912: 585–93); Mousnier (1992: 375–9).

Assemblies of the estates likewise remained important. The estates-general were not convened between 1615 and 1789, but had met only at long intervals even before. The provincial estates had always been more important, and remained so. In the pre-Reformation period, they had enjoyed the favour of the crown, which needed interlocutors to vote and thereby legitimize taxes for the crown. From the sixteenth century onwards, it was generally accepted in France that the crown could levy taxes without authorization from the estates. As this was no longer a necessary function of the assemblies of the estates, some of them convened less frequently thereafter.

Until the French Revolution, a distinction was made between the *pays d'états*, those provinces or areas where the estates (*états*) normally met annually or biannually to vote and administer the taxes requested by the crown, and the *pays d'élections*, where taxes were levied under the supervision of so-called *élus*, officials originally—in the pre-Reformation period—elected (*élus*) by the estates-general. Since the sixteenth century, they were in fact appointed by the crown, and in the eighteenth century they were under the authority of the *intendants*, chief regional officials of the crown whose role developed from the 1630s onwards. In the late *ancien régime*, the *pays d'élections* were concentrated in the middle of the kingdom, whereas the *pays d'états* tended to be situated on the periphery (Brittany, Artois, Cambrésis, Pays de Lille, Tournaisis, Hainault, Burgundy, Charolais, Mâconnais, Bresse, Bugey, Provence, Languedoc, and numerous areas in the south and southwest like Foix, Béarn, or Basse-Navarre). Also on the periphery were the *pays d'imposition*, where there were no *élus*, with tax administration overseen directly by the *intendants*. The *pays d'imposition* were new provinces gained since the reign of Charles IX—however, that was true also of some of the *pays d'états*. In the eighteenth century, the *pays d'états* paid noticeably less in taxes than the *pays d'élections*, though the situation of the latter was by no means homogeneous.

In fact, even in the *pays d'élection* the estates often remained active. Taxes for the crown were not normally on their agenda. That is the main reason why they met irregularly, as circumstances required. They would elect a syndic as their representative, raise complaints with the royal council, and indeed vote taxes for themselves, to be used for their own purposes. But, in the early eighteenth century and again in the late eighteenth century, the estates of the *pays d'élections* were actually convened by the crown, on the occasion of the introduction of additional taxes or other changes concerning taxation. This happened in 1694, 1710, 1711, 1772, 1773, 1774, 1782, and 1786. Moreover, in all provinces there existed some representative institution, a *parlement* or a *conseil souverain*, recruited from local notables and accepted both locally and by the crown as entitled to speak for their peers. Tellingly, new provinces acquired in the course of the expansion of the kingdom in the seventeenth century were routinely equipped with some such institution. The Franche-Comté received a *parlement* at Besançon, French Flanders one at Douai, Alsace obtained a *conseil souverain* at Colmar and Roussillon one at Perpignan. Corsica, purchased from Genoa in 1768, retained its estates.[313]

Such intermediary powers could not block measures desired by the crown in an open confrontation. They had to be heard, they could object, provoke a debate; but the crown had the last word. It was powerful. Yet it cannot be called sovereign in the sense in which that term is understood nowadays. For example, it could not really legislate. As noted,

[313] On the provincial estates Esmein (1912: 665–73); on the *élus* ibid. pp. 622–4, Mousnier (1990: 472–92).

thinkers like Bodin faced a major problem in trying to reconcile their notion that the king was above the law with the fact that on his accession he swore an oath to respect that law, meaning the rights and privileges of his subjects. I know of only one instance in which this oath was abolished and the one that had been sworn by the current king declared invalid—in Denmark and Norway (united under the same crown) in 1665, with the consent, ironically, of the estates of the realm.[314] France remained less 'absolutist' than that. That, in fact, the law remained above the king rather than the other way around is clear from the fact that there was more than one law. According to Pierre Goubert, late *ancien régime* France had some sixty regional systems of customary law (*coutumes*) and as many again that had only local validity. The clergy had its own legal norms, which were not the same throughout the kingdom. Efforts undertaken by the crown to unify French law never got at all far.[315]

As was the case elsewhere in *ancien régime* Europe, the local lordships (*seigneuries*) played a considerable role in France. Without them, the kingdom could not have functioned socially or politically. Among the many corporations of which the kingdom was composed, they were among the least spectacular—small, ubiquitous, their number vast. But it was they which, along with the parishes, provided much, perhaps most, of the administrative activities needed to keep social life going—at no cost to the crown. Without them, the appearance of a central power could not have been kept up.

Income from lordly rights—dues and services owed by the rural population—seems generally not to have been very substantial in the late *ancien régime*. It seems to have been more profitable to cultivate the land belonging to the lord himself (the demesne), or to lease it out. Yet the role of *seigneur* was apparently still coveted, not least because of the social prestige that went with it. It remained a functional role. The lord acted as protector of the rural community under his tutelage. His jurisdiction—he paid the personnel necessary to run a law court, but did not act as judge himself—seems to have remained important until the revolution; the number of lordships with active jurisdiction in the kingdom as a whole is estimated at 70,000–80,000. This jurisdiction was more accessible, faster, and cheaper than that of the crown, and frequently resorted to. Certain major offences could only be tried in crown courts; moreover a distinction was made between 'low', 'middle', and 'high' jurisdiction, depending on the money value of the case. Contrary to what one might expect, there was no necessary correlation between the prominence of the lord and the kind of jurisdiction that he possessed, with high jurisdiction sometimes attaching to very small lordships. Death sentences were possible but (as in *ancien régime* Germany) rare; in the province of La Marche (north-west of the Massif Central) they were automatically reviewed by the Paris *parlement*, and there may have been similar arrangements elsewhere.

Local lordships in France were mostly smaller than in Germany, where their total number, though upward of 10,000, was correspondingly lower. In Germany, they would normally comprise several villages, quite commonly ten or more; in France, although large lordships existed, often they covered only a single parish or, indeed, part of one. Thus, in the bishopric of Beauvais in the seventeenth century there were 432 parishes, but 617 local lordships. Of those, 294 lordships covered a whole parish, the other 323 less

[314] Kunisch (1979: 20).
[315] Goubert (1993: 80–1).

than one parish.[316] Noble estates without jurisdiction, which therefore did not qualify as lordships, existed both in Germany and in France, but appear to have been more frequent in France. It is my impression that in Germany most of the countryside was divided up into lordships, whereas in France there were many *fiefs* (fiefs) without jurisdiction. As in Germany, assemblies of the local inhabitants played an important role in community life and wielded some power with regard to the local ruling class; for example, they could (and did) take the local lord to court (and, again as in Germany, often won their case). They were in charge of maintaining the church, the vicarage, and the village school, as well as roads and bridges. In France they appear normally to have been coextensive with the parishes (rather than lordships, fiefs, or the like) and met several times a year after Sunday mass. They could be presided by the vicar or a representative of the lord, but most often would choose a leader from their midst. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the crown made them the object of regulations and sought to use them as a means of increasing its influence in the countryside, with, at best, mixed results.

Fiefs could be bought and sold almost like private property. However, they were nominally held from a lord who had to be acknowledged, paid 'homage' and indeed dues, which even in the eighteenth century happened as a matter of course. Dues were often light, symbolical. Selling fiefs also entailed dues to the lord, often (though this varied from one region to the next) a fifth of the selling price, the *quint*, plus the *requint* (a fifth of the *quint*, i.e. another 4 per cent of the selling price) if the dues to the lord were charged to the buyer (since in this case the selling price was less, so was the *quint*, a loss for which the *requint* partially compensated the lord). Likewise, when the lord died, his heirs were entitled to special dues. *Fiefs* could, in theory, only be held by those of noble status. This did not stop some of those of lesser status to acquire them anyway, often as part of a strategy to move up the social ladder. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the crown, perennially short of money, repeatedly offered to ennoble non-noble holders of *fiefs* for a fee. Repeatedly, too, it later declared such 'bought' noble status invalid—without refunding the fee but with the offer of clemency for an additional fee. Otherwise, non-noble holders of *fiefs* were subject to a special tax, the *droit de franc-fief* (unless they were burgesses of Paris or Périgueux).

If they wanted to avoid such extra expenses, those of non-noble status had to be content with so-called *censives* (which however might also have noble owners). Like *fiefs*, they were almost like private property but not quite. They were less prestigious than *fiefs*—a not unimportant consideration in a highly hierarchical, status-conscious society; perhaps for this reason the *lods et ventes* payable to the lord if one sold such property were markedly lower than the *quint et requint* to which they corresponded (the actual rate varied greatly). Further, there were many types of property often held by peasants (*complants*, *quevaises*, etc.) that entailed dues and occupied a position somewhere between a 'feudal' grant and a simple lease. Of course, it was not just peasants who would lease property. Anything could be the object of a lease—including, indeed, *fiefs* and *censives* themselves, or some portion thereof. Not necessarily a portion of the lands, or buildings, that they comprised, but also rights which went with them, for example to certain dues. Private (or, in 'feudal' terminology, 'alodial') property (*franc-alleu*) also existed, but it was not very common—in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, perhaps some 10 per cent in the *pays* (plural) *de droit écrit* (southern France,

[316] Goubert (1977: 41).

so called because the law there was based on Roman law, unlike the *pays de coutume* of northern France with their law based purely on custom—which, however, played a role in the *pays de droit écrit* as well). In 'feudal' legal parlance alodial property was 'held from god'. The crown made recurrent, and ultimately quite successful efforts to get accepted a theory under which any such property was actually to be considered as granted by the crown, in recognition of which the owners would pay the crown a fee—modest, but then there were many such owners. Understandably, the wealthy invested a great deal of care in their *terriers*, inventories of their lands (*terres*) and property rights.[317]

There is one part of *ancien régime* France in which a social and political system similar to that sketched above subsists even now. This is the Channel Islands, part of the old duchy of Normandy and at the same time the one part of its once extensive continental possessions that the English crown managed to hold onto. Although subject to the English crown, the Channel Islands never became part of the English kingdom and are not part of the United Kingdom now (the citizenship of the inhabitants is not 'British' but 'Channel Islander'). Their legal system is based on the customary law of *ancien régime* Normandy. Typically for the *ancien régime*, the fact that the archipelago is small (195 km^2, 130,000 inhabitants) is no reason for the different islands not to have a different political and even social system each. On the two largest islands, Jersey and Guernsey, the crown is represented by a Lieutenant Governor and a Bailiff, and the people by assemblies of the local estates (chaired by the Bailiff): the States of Jersey and, on Guernsey, the States of Deliberation (the States of Guernsey additionally comprise representatives of the parish councils and of the island of Alderney).

Apart from Guernsey itself and Alderney, the Bailiwick of Guernsey also includes the island of Sark, but at the same time Alderney and Sark are largely autonomous. Thus Alderney has its own estates, the States of Alderney. They are chaired by a President and have two representatives in the States of Guernsey. The little island of Sark (population *c.*500) is a fully functioning local lordship, complete with a hereditary lord bearing the French title *Seigneur* and an assembly, called the Chief Pleas. This comprises the more important members of the community, the holders of the forty original allotments of land on the island (known as 'tenements'); in addition there are twelve elected representatives. The *Seigneur* holds the island from the crown and in recognition of this fact pays it an annual sum of 1.79 pounds sterling (the odd figure no doubt resulting from the introduction of the 'decimal' pound; as noted, such symbolical dues were quite typical already of the late *ancien régime*). For his part, every time someone sells land on the island the *Seigneur* receives the *Treizième*, that is one-thirteenth (a little under 8 per cent) of the selling price; the rate suggests that we are dealing

[317] On the *seigneuries*, *fiefs* etc. Mousnier (1990: 370–436—forms of property: *passim*, *fiefs* esp. 375–82, *quint et requint* 378–9, *censives* 382–9, *franc-alleu* 371, 420–1; the *seigneurs* as protectors of the inhabitants of their lordships 409–10; revenue from lordly rights esp. 412–14, 422–3; local jurisdiction in general 391–409; total number of lordships with jurisdiction 401—for the number of lordships in Germany, see Marquardt (1999: 507); death sentences in La Marche 405; local assemblies 428–35); on 'bought' nobility Mousnier (1990: 105–7); on death sentences in Germany, see Marquardt (1999: 142–8) (according to this, in rural local lordships there would on average be one every twenty or thirty years, almost never against local residents but against itinerant elements of the population).

with *censives* not *fiefs*. The Sark system is of relatively recent origin, based on a royal charter of 1565 issued as part of a planned effort to settle the hitherto uninhabited island.[318]

The system in evidence in the archipelago is simply a remnant, with some recent modifications, of the type of system once found from one end of *ancien régime* Europe to the other—made up of units, from the kingdom as a whole downwards and with the smallest units very small, in which invariably a lord or his representative faced an assembly and/or other institutions representing the population through its more prominent members. If the same patterns recurred everywhere, nevertheless there was no uniformity, but rather endless variety in the details. This, too, was as true on the highest level—that of kingdoms, of which no two were really alike—as it was on the local level. As Pierre Goubert has remarked of Louis XIV, 'the King was not king to the same extent throughout his kingdom.'[319] Even 'absolutist' France in the late *ancien régime* was not a centralized territorial state in today's sense, but 'essentially a society of corporations and communities, which preserved powers of their own, freedoms, privileges'.[320] It remained closer to Althusius than to Hobbes.

This is also manifest from its lack of linear borders. *Ancien régime* France remained riddled with enclaves—a phenomenon that, as in Germany, reflects a social organization that was not primarily territorial. As noted, in the late fifteenth century the French crown and the imperial crown competed for the legacy of the duke of Burgundy, whose heiress eventually married a Habsburg rather than a French prince. This triggered two centuries of continual, and often determined, warfare between the French crown and the Habsburg dynasty. But in the treaty of Senlis of 1493, the French crown restored some Burgundian possessions that it had annexed to the Habsburg dynasty, among them the county of Charolais, situated deep within France. It is a little noted but significant curiosity that even as, more often than not, the French crown was at war with the Habsburg dynasty, Charolais remained in Habsburg hands until 1684, even though the French crown could have annexed it with ease. Similarly, the principality of Orange, in southern France, passed to the counts of Nassau in the sixteenth century. William 'of Orange', count of Nassau, *stadhouder* of the United Provinces and king of Britain from 1688, held it from the French crown even as that crown was at war with both the Dutch and the British. After his death in 1702 it passed, by inheritance, to the king of Prussia, who ceded it to the French crown in 1713 (which in its turn recognized his new royal title).

The Württemberg ducal house also held territory from the French crown—Horburg (Horbourg) and Reichenweiher (Riquewihr) in Alsace, and a little further south the county of Mömpelgard (Montbéliard)—which in fact came in two non-contiguous parts, one held from the French crown and one from the German, with the latter surrounded by French territory on all sides. Even after the annexation of much of Alsace by Louis XIV, and until the French Revolution, those Württemberg possessions remained untouched, since Louis only seized what he claimed were Habsburg rights to which he was entitled

[318] The official Sark Internet site provides a wealth of information about the history and organization of the island (www.sark.gov.gg; last accessed October 2006).

[319] Goubert (1993: 79), my trans.

[320] Mousnier (1990: 496), my trans.

under the terms of the Peace of Westphalia. That claim was often extremely dubious, but it is significant that even at his most reckless Louis never simply grabbed Alsace, the territory, as such—it was only revolutionary France that, in the 1790s, did precisely that. Similarly, the former imperial free city of Mülhausen (Mulhouse), in Alsace, remained an associated member (*zugewandter Ort*) of the Swiss Confederation until the French Revolution, even though it did not border on Confederation territory but was surrounded by French territory. The large but geographically frayed duchy of Lorraine passed to the French crown only in 1766, the duke having been given the grand-duchy of Tuscany, available after the demise of the Medici dynasty, instead. The pope kept Avignon and the county of Venaissin—within which the principality of Orange was almost an enclave—until the Revolution.

Peter Sahlins, in his study of the Spanish-French frontier in the late *ancien régime*, has demonstrated how little importance was attached to linear borders even in the seventeenth century.[321] In the Peace of the Pyrenees of 1659, the Spanish crown ceded two areas forming part of Catalonia, the Rosselló (Roussillon) and a portion of the Cerdanya (Cerdagne), to the French crown. The Cerdanya is a wide, fertile mountain valley drained by the Riu Segre (Sègre). I suspect that even a half-century later the main watershed of the Pyrenees would have been chosen as a demarcation line—as happened in the Utrecht peace treaties, which in 1715 defined the frontier between France and Savoy in the vicinity of the valley of Barcelonnette as following the *crête des Alpes*.[322] Rosselló/Roussillon is on the northern, 'French', side of the Pyrenees. But the Segre is a tributary of the Ebre (Ebro in Castilian): the Cerdanya is situated on the Spanish side of the main divide. Partitioning the Cerdanya rather than leaving it to Spain corresponded to the then French policy of securing 'gateways' (*portes*) into neighbouring territory, evident also in the acquisition of Breisach (as a bridgehead on the east bank of the Rhine), or the efforts to gain Casale, Pignerolo, and Saluzzo in Piedmont, and thus easy access to northern Italy.

The 1659 peace did not define the new frontier, leaving that task to a future agreement. It was negotiated in 1660 and basically cut the Cerdanya in half—though not, as one might have expected, along the river, which flows in an east–west direction, but in a north–south direction. Choosing the course of the river would have separated the many settlements on or near it from their fields and pastures on the other bank and thus, more importantly, cut up the local lordships. If there was one thing that, in line with the then prevalent ideas on, and the resources of, a central power, the French crown did not want, it was having to reorganize the local administration of the region. The desire to gain additional territory had to be subordinated to the need to leave the self-administration of the local population intact, so as not to burden the crown with a task it could not easily carry out.

After much haggling, thirty-three out of a total of some eighty towns and villages of the Cerdanya were ceded to the French crown. Both of the major settlements, the capital Puigcerdà and Llívia, remained Spanish, even as the land around Llívia became French. This was no oversight: both sides dispatched commissioners to the valley and were informed about every detail of the situation there. Indeed, the French demanded a

[321] Sahlins (1989).
[322] Osiander (1994: 147).

guarantee from the Spaniards that Llívia would not be fortified, whereas the Spaniards demanded that the portion of the road connecting Llívia with Puigcerdà that ran through French territory would be considered neutral. No demarcation line was fixed: it was understood that the settlements in question knew themselves where their own territory ended. An exception was the hamlet of Hix, where a tributary of the Segre, the Riu Reür (Raour), was agreed on as marking the frontier. At the same time, however, it was expressly laid down that while the Reür would henceforth separate the French kingdom from the Spanish kingdom, it would not separate those parts of the *seigneurie* (lordship) of Hix situated beyond the river from the rest. More generally, the new frontier had no effect on existing feudal and ecclesiastical arrangements. Private individuals as well as the church kept all rights—for example, to nominate clergy or levy tithes—and property they might possess. The bishop of La Seu d'Urgell (the Catalan name; Seo de Urgel in Castilian), situated downstream on the Segre, remained in charge of all of the Cerdanya—at least in theory, though with Franco-Spanish relations often poor he might be barred from visiting parishes in the French part. In time of war, the Spaniards would occupy the French part of the Cerdanya or vice versa, but the next peace treaty invariably brought a return to the 1660 agreement.

Sahlins shows that in the eighteenth century, and in particular in the last two decades of the *ancien régime*, the French crown began to be dissatisfied with the, from a 'territorialist' viewpoint, 'messy' character of its borders. Thus, negotiations with the Spanish crown were begun to simplify the common frontier in the Pyrenees, causing the inhabitants of Llívia to protest against what they feared was their imminent passage under French rule. The Spanish crown seems to have been unmoved by the feelings of a mere few hundred people and prepared to cede this splinter of Spain in the middle of territory already French. But rectification of the frontier began at the other end of the Pyrenees, in the Basque country, and had not reached the Catalan end when the French Revolution intervened. As a result, it was only in 1866 that a treaty concerning this part of the frontier was concluded. Meanwhile, the territorial, centralized, homogeneous nation state had been invented. The fate of Llívia was now a question of Spanish national honour. Whereas in the late eighteenth century the Spanish crown would have ceded the little town without compunction (it had a population of some 700 in 1660, and of some 1,200 at the time of writing), now it held on to it—but the French side was not prepared to give up any territory, either.

Thus, paradoxically, in 1866 the 1660 agreement was retained, with this difference that now a demarcation line was fixed. Absurdly, Llívia, as a Spanish outpost, now finds its 13 km^2 territory surrounded and defined by forty-five numbered stone markers, despite the fact that the distance separating that territory from the rest of Spain is about a kilometre (less than a mile). As more people acquired cars, in the twentieth century the 'neutral' road linking Llívia to the rest of Spain became the scene of what French inhabitants of the region refer to as *la guerre des stops*: nationalists on the Spanish side of the frontier took offence at the fact that the French authorities expected those travelling on this road to give way at two intersections, hazardously ignoring and, time and again, demolishing the 'stop' signs put up to that effect. The problem has recently been fixed by means of a roundabout and an overpass constructed at the expense of the Spanish government, even though they are situated on French territory.

4.4.3 *Ancien régime* kingdoms and comparable political units as precursors not prototypes of the modern state

Even two countries as different, at first sight, as France and Germany in the late *ancien régime* were in fact closely related not only in their social organization, but even in their political organization. Their constitutional arrangements were markedly dissimilar, but derived from the same basic patterns, and those underlying patterns were not those of the modern state.

The similarity of the underlying patterns is demonstrated in similar phenomena occurring in different parts of Europe. Thus, in the pre-Reformation period, Tomburg castle and the surrounding land were disputed between the count (later duke) of Jülich, some 40 km (25 miles) distant, and the elector-archbishop of Cologne, whose main residence, Bonn, was some 20 km distant. Both sought to secure, if not the place itself, then at least the fealty of its tenants. In the fifteenth century, the Tomburg lordship was divided among three tenants: the lord (*Burggraf*) of Rheineck castle (not far distant on the Rhine) held it jointly with the von Quadt and von Sombref families, of which the last-named resided in Tomburg castle itself. It is said that they used it as a base for raids. At any rate they incurred the wrath of the duke of Jülich as liege lord. In 1473, he had the castle captured and dismantled; it has been a ruin ever since, with the stump of the keep still a landmark. The duke thereafter kept the Sombref share in the lordship for himself. In subsequent generations, the duchy of Jülich passed to the Elector-Palatine by way of inheritance, as did the electorate of Bavaria. In the sixteenth century, the Quadt family purchased the Rheineck portion of the lordship; this two-thirds share eventually passed to the Dalwigk-Lichtenfels family. As a result, in the late eighteenth century the little lordship was held jointly by one of the very greatest princes of the German empire and an obscure local gentleman.

A very similar case is better known because, by a historical accident, it has survived the end of the *ancien régime*. In the thirteenth century, control over seven valleys in the Pyrenees situated immediately west of the Cerdanya was sought both by the local bishop, whose cathedral stands 20 km to the south, and by the count of Foix, a town situated 50 km (30 miles) to the north. Tired of the endless quarrel between those two, the king of Aragón in 1278 forced them to establish a joint lordship (*paréage* in French, *pareatge* in Catalan) over the seven valleys. As in the case of the Tomburg lordship, one of the parties to this set-up remained a local figure, whereas the other 'evolved': the county of Foix passed by inheritance to the king of Navarra (or more precisely the other way around), as, in 1589, did the French crown. In 1607, Henry IV of France and Navarra formally joined his share in the lordship over the seven valleys to the French kingdom. As a result, the little principality of Andorra (453 km^2, some 70,000 inhabitants; so called after the capital of the seven valleys) is now ruled jointly by the bishop of a Catalan mountain town, La Seu d'Urgell (population, 20,000), and the President of the French Republic (population, fifty-seven million).

Like the (from today's point of view) idiosyncratic division of the Cerdanya next door, this set-up might not have survived the rectification of the Spanish-French frontier in the late eighteenth century had that not been interrupted by the French Revolution. It was the supersession of *ancien régime* monarchy by the nation state that probably saved it, paradoxically freezing the situation as it did in the Cerdanya: Andorra survived because, with both having a stake in it thanks to the old *paréage*, neither the Spanish

nor the French government would give it up. The 1993 constitution of the principality explicitly confirms the bishop and the president as 'co-princes' (*coprinceps*) and indeed gives them considerable powers, which, however, they can only exercise jointly, through their local representatives. Of course there are 'estates', too, assembled in the General Council of the Valleys (*Consell General de las Valls*). The Council, which has met since 1419, now serves as a legislature. Traditionally, it consisted of four representatives from each of the seven valleys. Since nowadays most of the population lives in the capital Andorra la Veja, the new constitution lays down that the Council is to be composed of at least twenty-eight and at most forty-two members, half of them representatives of the valleys (each of which is to have an equal number of representatives), and the other half elected from lists by the electorate as a whole.[323]

The king of France had and has a reputation for being powerful. He was, in the politics of *ancien régime* Europe as a whole, indeed of the world. This was a consequence of the wealth that he managed to extract from his subjects, and of the fact that his domestic position was secure—but his domestic power was quite limited. Referring to various branches and officials of the royal administration under Louis XIV, Pierre Goubert paints a picture of near-anarchy:

> The King anointed at Reims, the quasi-priest King was revered, almost venerated—from afar, that is. Let one of his envoys turn up in the village . . . and there was hostility, or at least a principled distrust: what new-fangled thing would he bring now? what insult to custom? . . . One cannot insist enough on that partitioned life . . . that pious horror of innovation . . . that were like the very texture of the kingdom of France in the *ancien régime*. Go try and make the voice of the king heard deep in the countryside if the vicar, sole agent of diffusion, sabotages, messes up, or forgets that role . . . , when the [royal] courts are far away, expensive, not very reliable and not very respected, the *maréchaussée* absent, the *intendant* unknown, and the *subdélégué* powerless? You have to see the unfortunate Colbert trying to impose his manufactures, his pedantic regulations, his companies: no one wants them . . . ; you have to count, in the archives of the *Eaux et Forêts*, the files of the *gabelle* administration, the incredible number and variety of contraventions. . . . If, blinded by the golden gleam of Versailles, you forget the pullulation of all those deep phenomena, you have understood nothing of the France of Louix XIV, of the impossible task that the monarch and his clerks dared undertake, of the enormous inertia that made it so difficult.[324]

This was no territorial state with a central power able to control (and if necessary, coerce, or, for that matter, provide incentives to) the inhabitants. Nor was the limited reach of the crown due to some 'malfunction' or exceptional weakness: it was, on the contrary, part and parcel of the social and political organization of the *ancien régime*. There *could* be no strong central power in the *ancien régime*—people like Nicholas of Kues, Bodin, Louis XIV, Colbert, Hobbes, Frederic William of Prussia might dream of such power, but it was not until the French Revolution at last triggered a paradigm shift and ushered in a form of social and political organization radically different from that of the *ancien régime* that the type of governance to which we are accustomed nowadays became possible.

If it was a revolution in France that triggered this paradigm shift, the reason was not that France was more advanced on the road towards the 'modern state' than other countries. It was the fact that the crown had pushed into the background those players

[323] *Constitució del Principat d'Andorra* arts. 1, 43ff., 52.
[324] Goubert (1993: 354–5), my trans.

and institutions that in other countries retained a more visible share of power. The apparent royal monopoly on power made the crown more vulnerable. If, in reality, it was far from all-powerful, nevertheless it liked to present itself as very nearly that; as a result, even though it had not in fact succeeded in attracting all power to itself, it did succeed in attracting all the dissatisfaction with the condition of French society. Unfortunately for it, the crown was far from having the coercive means to defend itself, and, absent other players with a stake in running the country, now lacked domestic allies. By contrast, in Germany or Britain, where there was no ostensible monopoly on power of the crown, bringing the system down would have involved more than simply disempowering the king. This situation is comparable to that of Russia in 1917. There, too, the socialist, 'workers' revolution did not succeed because Russia was more developed than other countries, but because its autocratic regime was easy to topple.

Both the power and the powerlessness of the French crown are well illustrated by the salt tax. On the one hand, the income from it was substantial, and the fact that the crown was able to keep this highly invasive and unpopular system of taxation in being is a mark of its strong position in society. On the other hand, people at the time were agreed that the system was irrational and cried out for reform. Any observer could see that a system forcing part of the population to buy a basic, indispensable commodity at a price many times that paid by the rest of the population necessarily gave rise to a huge and ultimately uncontrollable black market. The profit margin of the smugglers was very high, as, by consequence, was their number; had they wished to combat them effectively the tax authorities would probably have been forced to spend all their revenue from this tax for this purpose. Of course that would have been absurd: what resulted instead was a situation where a still expensive supervision and enforcement staff served merely to affirm the principle that what the smugglers did was illegal without being able to put a stop to it.

The solution was obvious and proposals to bring it about were repeatedly made to Louis XIV, Louix XV, and Louis XVI. The crown would take over the production of salt from the private entrepreneurs that hitherto it had been controlling at a cost not much less, if at all, than the cost of simply taking their place. The price of salt would have been set at a uniform, relatively low level for the entire kingdom. Although some would have paid more, on average the population would have paid less for their salt. But the crown would have saved the money for a bloated administration to run the system. As noted, in 1681 the tax farmers paid Louis XIV 23.9 million *livres* for a period of five years. Six years earlier Vauban had suggested to the king a system which he calculated would bring in 23.4 million *annually*. Vauban assumed that the crown would charge retailers eighteen *livres* per *minot* (*c.*76 l) and leave it to them at what price they would resell to their customers; the 1680 *ordonnance* set a price of between thirty and forty-three *livres* (the figure was calculated individually for each tax district) per *minot* to be paid by consumers in the *pays de grande gabelle*. Similar proposals were made in the eighteenth century by Boulainvilliers, Saint-Simon, Necker, or Calonne.[325]

If no reform took place, it was not because the crown was stupid, but because, bound by tradition, it did not have the power. A major problem addressed by the authors of reform projects was the likelihood that provinces where the price of salt would go

[325]Pasquier (1905: 133–47); cf. ibid. p. 30 (where the unit of measurement is wrongly given as *muid* rather than *minot*, cf. 44), 102.

up would rebel (the very rumour that a salt tax was to be introduced caused riots in Britanny in 1675). To prevent that, it was deemed necessary to hold out new privileges to those put at a disadvantage by the reform projects to mollify them. Enticing as the prospect of multiplying its revenue from the salt trade must have been, the crown never took the risk, preferring to put up the *gabelle* again and again. This of course made the black market still more lucrative; but the advantage was that the *gabelle* was a traditional tax to which people were accustomed and against which they would not rebel just because it had gone up another fraction. If even nowadays people tend to accept social or political arrangements that would outrage them if they were newly introduced, in late *ancien régime* France this was compounded by the 'inertia' highlighted by Goubert, the widespread notion that custom ought to be respected and innovation was bad.

The *gabelle* demonstrates clearly that even the crown of 'absolutist' France possessed little legislative power. It could not simply abrogate the old system and put in place a new one even if objectively everything should have pushed it in that direction: both itself and the population as a whole would have been better off. The basic difficulty here was that *ancien régime* society was not based on laws but on their opposite: on privileges. Engelbert of Admont reminded his readers that *privilegia paucorum non faciunt legem communem*, the privileges of the few do not give rise to common laws.[326] It would not be much of an exaggeration to say that common or general laws—very much a cornerstone of today's state—were exactly what no one in the *ancien régime* wanted. The crown was incapable of legislation in today's sense because it was the epitome of a society based not on legislation but on privileges—of which the prerogatives of the crown were only the most conspicuous. Any attempt to tamper with privileges as the basis of *ancien régime* society endangered—indeed would soon bring down—the crown, and with it that entire society itself.

It is probable that abolishing the *gabelle* would have provoked a negative reaction of those with special rights in regard of it—the nobility, the clergy, those enjoying the *privilège de franc-salé*—even if the measure had resulted in reducing the price of salt for them. Saving money may well not have been as important to them as the outward marks of their status, which, in *ancien régime* society and unlike today's society, were not directly linked with their wealth. This is indicated by abundant records of eighteenth-century lawsuits concerning failure to comply properly with the obligations incumbent on holders of fiefs, trivial as those obligations often were. Roland Mousnier cites the case of a 'liege lord' entitled to annual 'payment' of a goose. When the accused protested that he had in fact had the goose delivered, he was told that his failure to send a *liveried* servant for the purpose amounted to an insult; this was then fought over in court for ten years. Comical as this may appear it illustrates the importance of status symbols whose main value was not economic.[327]

Thus, in the late *ancien régime*, many noble families in France were much less successful economically, and indeed much poorer, than many rich burgesses, often their creditors and therefore also, in the long run, new owners of what had once been noble property. Indeed, non-noble creditors would seek out desirable noble property to secure loans that they expected would *not* be repaid. Nevertheless, however rich they became, non-noble persons could never hope to outclass noblemen, however impoverished, socially.

[326] Engelbert of Admont, *De ortu* 18.
[327] Mousnier (1990: 422).

What they could hope for—and this to some extent masks the fact that many old noble families were under increasing pressure from non-noble capital—was to attain noble status themselves: awarded for service to the crown, bought, or, not infrequently, faked. Even conferment of a noble title would not immediately bring social equality with more ancient nobility. But, strapped for money, ancient nobility was not above marrying new nobility of lesser status but greater wealth to save themselves economically, reducing if not levelling the status difference over time.[328]

Far from being above the law, the crown was its prisoner: it had to work within a framework that it could not substantially alter. Reform was either not attempted at all, as in the case of the *gabelle*, or it failed. For example, chancellor Maupeou in 1771 abolished the Paris *parlement* and its branches in the provinces in an attempt, precisely, to free the crown from the stranglehold of the notables and their established interests, opposed to innovation. But the measure was rescinded only three years later. A very serious problem at this time was that the crown needed more income than the established taxes could yield, difficult as it was to raise them yet further. At the beginning of the 1780s, Necker, the *contrôleur-général des finances* or finance minister of the crown, calculated that the Champagne paid six times as much in taxes to the crown as the Franche-Comté, situated near the eastern border of the kingdom—even though the Champagne had only 20 per cent more inhabitants; or that on average a Breton annually paid the crown twelve *livres* in taxes, but someone living in the Île-de-France paid sixty-four.[329]

This is more evidence of the heterogeneity of the kingdom, of the fact noted by Pierre Goubert that 'the King was not equally king' throughout it; it also suggests that the degree of control exercised by the crown still diminished in proportion as Paris was more distant. What we saw to be true of the *gabelle* was no doubt true of taxes generally: equalizing them throughout the kingdom would have brought relief to those who, as a result of continual piecemeal augmentation of the existing chaotic array of taxes, bore an increasingly disproportionate share of the total burden; it would not have overburdened the rest; and it would have given the crown a much greater income than before. But the crown was powerless to initiate the necessary reforms: André Bourde has described the French 'absolutism' of this period as 'fettered' (*absolutisme ligoté*).[330]

Almost ruined by a general economic crisis made worse by the expensive intervention of the French crown against the British crown to aid the newly independent USA, the crown at last became desperate to reform the system of taxation, but projects to that effect by Calonne and Loménie de Brienne failed in quick succession. Calonne, in 1787, tried to get the support of an 'assembly of notables' (*assemblée des notables*) picked by the king, bypassing the *parlements*; Loménie de Brienne in 1788 appealed to the *parlements* themselves. But rather than the hoped-for support for the projects of the crown this produced calls to convene the estates-general, dormant since 1614. The crown did so in 1789 and quickly lost control of the situation to that assembly.

Adopting the new name of 'National Assembly', the delegates set about replacing privileges with general laws. Since privileges had hitherto been everything and general laws had been practically non-existent, this produced a 'revolution' in the most literal sense. Everything changed; everything that was old vanished. The *gabelle* was abolished

[328] Goubert (1977: 219–20, 237–52).
[329] Anderson (1993: 130).
[330] Bourde (1977: 326).

in 1790; the crown itself in 1792. The old kingdom as a conglomerate of individual (and individualistic) corporations and communities was replaced by a territorial state whose central power exercised homogeneous control over its territory, now more clearly demarcated than before as the new French state annexed enclaves like the pope's Venaissin or the Württemberg possessions in Alsace. The police grew enormously: rechristened *gendarmerie nationale*, as early as 1792 it had a staff of 11,000—up from 5,000 three years before.[331] Out went the old provinces with their distinct legal and administrative traditions, to be replaced by new administrative districts (the *départements*) of roughly equal size and whose borders ignored the historical geography of the country completely. In 1801, the new *Code civil* gave the country the unitary legal order that it had never previously had. In this new France, this new state, there was no room for property that was not either private or public. Hitherto, as we saw, very little property had in fact been either: but the *fiefs*, the *censives*, the *seigneuries* that had been building blocks of *ancien régime* France disappeared without a trace, as if they had never existed. It is no exaggeration to say that, for better or worse, a whole social universe vanished so completely that few people even know about it now, giving rise to the entirely erroneous notion that *ancien régime* social and political organization was comparable to that of a nineteenth- or twentieth-century state.

But did the revolution not remain limited to France; was it not fought by the rest of Europe, which at last, in 1814/15, engineered a 'restoration'? In fact, that word is a misnomer. The French monarchy is a good illustration of this: a king indeed returned in 1814, and he was even a member of the ancient dynasty, yet the new monarchy had very little in common with the old. France remained a unitary, homogeneous state based on laws not privileges; if not only the royal house but indeed much of the nobility resumed an elevated position in society, nevertheless it was on a totally different legal basis than before. Meanwhile, the revolution triumphed elsewhere as well, key aspects of it enthusiastically espoused by the very rulers who claimed to be opposed to it. The king of Prussia introduced a new legal code for all his dominions as early as 1794, suppressed the cathedral chapters and monasteries (such as those that we encountered in Minden) everywhere in his dominions in 1810, and in 1815 replaced those dominions themselves with 'provinces' (*Provinzen*) which within their new, partially arbitrary borders all functioned alike. At the same time (beginning with the so-called October Edict of 1807, and more importantly the Edict of Regulation of 1811), the destruction of the local lordships and their transformation into private property—mostly of the lords rather than of the peasants, many of whom were deprived of their livelihood in the process—got under way.

Nor were such phenomena limited to the dominions of the king of Prussia. Throughout the Holy Roman Empire, stronger rulers grabbed what could be grabbed. In 1803, they agreed within the framework of the *Reichstag* to suppress the ecclesiastical principalities, numerous lesser secular principalities and lordships, and almost all the free cities for their own benefit. In some parts of Germany, a kind of civil war between princes and lesser lords briefly flared up: castles were seized and even went up in flames, their lords led away in chains.[332] The emperor protested against such excesses, in vain, and in 1806 declared the Holy Roman Empire dissolved. This was only logical. With the revolution

[331] Cameron (1977: 51).
[332] Aretin (1992*a*: 48–9); Marquardt (1999: 448).

unleashed and impossible to force back into the bottle whence it had escaped, the empire could not be saved. Like the old French kingdom, it was an elaborate, intricate edifice built on custom and privileges; it simply could not be turned into the centralized political unit now mandatory. Instead it fragmented, with the more powerful rulers each creating a separate state of their own in place of the larger entity of which they had previously been part. Contrary to their predecessors in the old empire, those rulers were now largely unimpeded by provincial estates or other 'intermediary powers': they were, for the first time, absolute rulers, truly sovereign.

The main difference between France and much of the rest of Europe was that in France those who smashed the old order also smashed the monarchy, whereas elsewhere it was rulers themselves who got to do the smashing—for their own benefit even though that of course is not how they presented it. (It also helped that under Napoleon or even earlier much of Europe came under French occupation: this destroyed much of the old social and political structures or at least left them in disarray, facilitating their subsequent removal.) It has to be said in those rulers' favour that they only had the option of smashing the existing set-up themselves, or of being smashed along with it. Once called in question at a fundamental level, the *ancien régime* unravelled almost by itself, in a sort of chain reaction, and simply could no longer be sustained even if anyone had wanted to.

4.4.4 Autonomous political actors in the *ancien régime*

In the late eighteenth century, the equivalent of what present-day IR theory calls 'international actors' were still, on the whole, persons wearing a crown. The basic political unit of *ancien régime* Europe was always the kingdom, irrespective of whether, or to what degree, the crown actually acted as a central power. It needed no power to survive: no *ancien régime* kingdom ever disappeared through conquest. True, the Polish kingdom was suppressed in 1795—but only after the French Revolution had broken out, and the general process of smashing the old order and grabbing the spoils had begun.

In the *ancien régime*, the princes and cities of the Holy Roman Empire were content formally to defer to the emperor. To be sure, the 1648 Peace of Westphalia had confirmed their right to make alliances with actors outside the empire—but this was an old right, not a newly won one, and the text of the peace insisted that it must not be exercised to the detriment of the empire or the emperor.[333] Princes largely respected this restriction. Loyalty to *Kaiser und Reich* was very much part of the prevailing political culture, so that even contraventions were dressed up accordingly. But, in any case, it simply made more sense to seek the good will of the emperor than that of rulers outside the empire: both in terms of legitimacy and of relative material power the emperor played the role of natural hegemon in central Europe, a role that the king of Prussia began to challenge only in the second half of the eighteenth century. Moreover, the right confirmed in 1648 belonged to the period before the cult of 'sovereignty'. By the latter part of the seventeenth century, non-royal, non-'sovereign' actors were no longer regarded as the prized interlocutors they had once been. Not that they were completely shunned, but they were not held in the same respect as before.

In this situation, actors wanting to be part of the inner circle of European politics were well advised to find themselves a crown. Contrary to the thinking of those who have

[333] IPO 8.1.

tended to equate 'state-making' with 'war-making', royal status could not be achieved by military means. It took the elector of Brandenburg years of laborious negotiations to have his new title of 'king of Prussia', adopted in 1701, accepted by the other members of the European royal club. We should note that this elector was Frederic III (Frederic I as king), much less bent on military achievement than either his predecessor or his eighteenth-century successor Frederic II. We should also note that although his predecessor had been involved in quite a lot of warfare, he had not been very successful, and that of the Brandenburg dominions under him or Frederic I not *one* had been acquired by conquest. The notion that Brandenburg became a major military player already in the seventeenth century has been shown by Peter Michael Hahn to be a myth produced by nineteenth- and twentieth-century historians. Hahn points out that prior to the conquest of Silesia in 1740 the Brandenburg rulers were rather less conspicuous in terms of military achievement than other German princes.[334] In fact, this probably helped Frederic I in his endeavour to have his new royal title recognized. His grandson Frederic II was far more respected as a military leader, but also far more controversial. Idolized by some, decried by others, he would no doubt have experienced far greater difficulties having his crown recognized had he not inherited it.

The second 'new' European crown of the late *ancien régime* was acquired by the duke of Savoy in 1713, in the context of the Peace of Utrecht. He, too, did not gain it because he was powerful, but because by adroitly oscillating between other, more powerful actors (the French crown, the British crown, and the emperor) he managed to sell his support very profitably. In fact, what he originally secured was not a new crown but the ancient crown of Sicily. As this was far removed from the rest of his dominions, he soon exchanged it for Habsburg-held Sardinia. As the duke of course insisted on retaining his royal status as part of the bargain and became 'king of Sardinia', a new kingship was added to the European system, although this had not been the original intention. (In fact it was not totally new in that already in 1297 pope Boniface VIII had created a kingdom of Corsica and Sardinia and given it to the king of Aragón as a papal fief. The Aragonese had, however, still to conquer the two islands, and eventually established their rule only over Sardinia, not Corsica. Later, the dominions of the Aragonese crown became part of the Habsburg dominions by inheritance.) Again, the duke was seen as a suitable candidate for a crown because he was reasonably powerful, but not to the extent of being a serious threat to anyone else.

There were indeed some notable non-royal autonomous actors in the late *ancien régime*, but they were exceptional—not a deliberate antithesis to the paradigm of kingship but the result of historical contingency. They were the Swiss Confederation, the Dutch United Provinces, Genoa, and Venice. As free cities, the latter two were relics of an age when the crown had not yet been considered 'sovereign' in the sense which Bodin gave to that word, and cities acting independently in European politics were as yet nothing unusual. Genoa was technically one of the free cities of the Holy Roman Empire, and Venice had actually been part of the eastern empire. Since neither empire established any very effective rule over northern Italy, they retained their autonomous status. So did their rival Florence, with this difference that whereas the leadership of Genoa and Venice remained elective, in Florence it became hereditary in the Medici family, who became grand dukes of Tuscany.

[334] Hahn (2001).

Genoa technically continued to be part of the Holy Roman Empire until the end of the *ancien régime*. True, it last did homage to the emperor Matthew in the early seventeenth century and evaded this obligation under his successors. But that did not prevent it, in 1714, from prevailing, in a not very 'republican' spirit, on the emperor Charles VI to grant it the right to add royal insignia to its flag—so that its ships would not have to greet foreign ships, likewise sailing under some royal flag, first! If Charles was well disposed towards Genoa, it was because the city had, in fact, agreed to pay the taxes to the emperor that had been demanded of it in the course of the War of the Spanish Succession, just ended. In any case, leading Genoese families, such as notably the Doria, held other Italian fiefs from the emperor. In 1731, the Genoese appealed to the emperor in his quality as their liege lord to support them against the insurgent Corsicans, which he did by sending troops.

Conversely, in 1729 the town of San Remo filed suit against Genoa before the Imperial Aulic Council on the grounds that its subjection to Genoa was unlawful. However, as the request of 1731 also shows, the emperor—still Charles VI—rather favoured the Genoese, and did not do much to help San Remo. That caused the town, in 1753, to appeal to the king of Sardinia, whose court was in Turin. Unfortunately for San Remo, this only led to the town being bombarded by the Genoese and subjected to humiliating punitive measures, but not to any intervention from Turin. With remarkable pertinacity, in 1769 San Remo actually brought the matter before the *Reichstag*. In 1772, Genoa at last agreed to give up San Remo—the negotiations being led, on the side of the emperor, by one prince Doria. The Genoese did not quite fulfil their pledge, only relaxing but not abandoning their control of San Remo. But the point here is that throughout the whole affair they never denied being subject to imperial jurisdiction. The same was true of the north Italian princes. When the emperor Leopold, in 1697, requested all holders of north Italian fiefs to present the relevant charters for confirmation, he was surprised to learn that he had far more Italian vassals than his chancery knew of. Even though it had never done homage to Leopold itself, Genoa in response to the decree nevertheless asked the emperor to be re-enfeoffed with several places under its control—a request granted, if only after lengthy negotiations, in 1709.[335]

The Swiss Confederation obtained exemption from the jurisdiction of the empire in 1499, but this did not amount to a formal separation. The more so as this was still the pre-Reformation period, demarcating oneself from the neighbours was not yet a pressing political concern, and no one, either among the Swiss themselves or in the rest of christendom, was particularly bothered about their formal status within it. Forming a confederation within the empire was nothing unusual—close by, the Swabian Confederation played an important role in the politics of the empire around 1500. Nor was exemption from the jurisdiction of the empire so unusual. The Habsburg dynasty obtained it in 1548 for those of their possessions that they had inherited from the dukes of Burgundy, that is, essentially, the Low Countries (the present-day Benelux countries) and what is now western France. It is this fact which explains why, contrary to a widespread misperception, the United Provinces (the seven northernmost provinces of the Low Countries, now the Kingdom of the Netherlands) in 1648 sought formal recognition of their independence from the Spanish crown but not from the empire. At the time of the Peace of Westphalia, the Low Countries had been outside the jurisdiction of the empire

[335] Aretin (1992*b*: 123–4, 152–3).

for a century (this essentially meant that neither the *Reichstag* nor the supreme courts of the empire had any authority there). The southern part of the Low Countries (what is now Belgium) passed to the German branch of the Habsburg dynasty after the Spanish branch became extinct in 1700, and today's historical maps show those lands as part of the eighteenth-century empire. But this is simply because they happened to belong to the emperor. In fact the *Reichstag* or the supreme courts had no more authority in Brussels than they did in Amsterdam or in Zürich, that is, no authority at all—whereas they did have authority in Genoa.

The Swiss Confederation was very much a phenomenon of the *ancien régime* in that it had no clearly demarcated territory or linear borders. There were full members and associated members (the latter known as *zugewandte Orte*). Associated members were under the protection of the full members but had no share in the decision-making of the Confederation—at least they were not formally entitled to any such participation. They comprised for example the Grey Leagues (*Graubünden*), themselves composed of three distinct local leagues, the principality of Neuenburg (whose prince, in the eighteenth century, was the king of Prussia, having been elected to this position by the Neuenburg estates from among a number of contenders for the succession of William of Orange in 1702), the Valais, Geneva, Mülhausen (now Mulhouse) in Alsace, and Rottweil in Swabia. The latter two were free cities of the empire, and thus estates of the empire represented in the *Reichstag* as well as being associated members of the Swiss Confederation. By the late eighteenth century, Mülhausen had ceased to be listed among the estates of the empire,[336] but Rottweil always retained this status. On the other hand, Basel, also originally a free city of the empire, gave up that status on joining the Confederation in the early sixteenth century—but it joined as a full member.

The sole common institution of the Confederation was its assembly or diet, the *Tagsatzung*. It consisted of the representatives of the full members and in the post-Reformation period normally met about three times a year—in the sixteenth century ordinarily in Zürich, in the seventeenth century at Baden-im-Aargau, in the eighteenth century at Frauenfeld. It was a purely consultative assembly without any executive powers. Unlike the German *Reichstag*, its decisions bound only those members that ratified them, a procedure that took place once the delegates had returned home. Majority decisions were only taken with regard to the *Untertanenländer* or dependent territories of the Confederation. More frequent than *Tagsatzungen* of the entire Confederation were particular *Tagsatzungen* in which the catholic and protestant members met separately. Like other decisions of the *Tagsatzung*, foreign treaties concluded by the Confederation were binding only on those members (full members as well as associated members) that wished to be included.[337]

No more than the treaty of 1499 did the members of the Confederation regard the Peace of Westphalia as marking the formal end of their belonging to the Holy Roman Empire. It was the city of Basel which, having joined the Confederation only after the 1499 treaty, insisted on a reference to the Confederation being included in the 1648 peace, for the specific purpose of confirming its own membership in the Confederation

[336] The list of estates represented in the *Reichstag* in 1792 (Zeumer 1913: no. 220) does not mention it.

[337] *Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz*, 'Tagsatzung'.

since that had not yet been recognized in any formal way on the part of the empire. The relevant clause in the 1648 Treaty of Osnabrück clearly reflects this specific purpose, rather than being concerned with the status of the Confederation in general—though that, in the nature of the whole undertaking, was of course confirmed as well.[338] Even after 1648, the oath of citizenship in some cantons (full members of the Confederation) contained a reference to the Holy Roman Empire—in Zürich until 1654, in Solothurn until 1681, in Schaffhausen until 1714. Even after that date, the village of Wilchingen sued the town of Schaffhausen, to which it was subject, before the Imperial Aulic Council in the context of a quarrel that erupted in 1717 and continued for many years.[339]

The *ancien régime* Swiss Confederation again poses a problem for today's mapmakers. Owing to the different status of its component parts, it cannot be shown as a homogeneously coloured territory—at least not without creating a false impression of what it was; yet unless the focus is on Switzerland alone the amount of detail necessary to indicate the character of the Confederation as a rather heterogeneous conglomerate is usually not practical. For example, the territory controlled by the abbey of Saint Gall (territory that now forms one of the Swiss cantons) is usually shown on present-day maps of seventeenth- or eighteenth-century Europe as belonging to something that most people looking at such maps would simply identify as 'Switzerland'. But Saint Gall was an associated, not a full member of the Confederation and combined that status with continuing links with the empire. In his capacity as secular prince of the territory of the abbey, the abbot received his investiture from the emperor until 1805 even though he was not represented in the *Reichstag*. The abbot had capital jurisdiction—and not only was this jurisdiction originally given him by the emperor (no doubt sometime in the pre-Reformation period), but even in the eighteenth century this fact was explicitly invoked for the purpose of formal legitimation. When, in the eighteenth century, a representative of the abbot opened sessions of the abbot's court, he would do so using the following formula:

> Whereas by virtue of the full powers granted by His Majesty the Roman emperor, our most gracious lord, and his most gracious investiture of the most worthy and noble lord abbot of the princely abbey and house of god of Saint Gall, our gracious prince and lord, I have been appointed a bailiff of the Holy Roman Empire, and . . . having been asked to bring to bear the emperor's law, have appointed this day to enquire: whether time and place be appropriate that I should seize the sword and, taking it in my hand, should sit down with the members of the jury to judge the causes brought before us, in accordance with the law of the emperor and the Holy Roman Empire?[340]

[338] IPO 6.

[339] Staehelin (1991: 90).

[340] *Nachdem aus der römisch Kaiserlichen Majestät unsers allergnädigsten Herrn Vollmacht und allergnädigster Belehnung des hochwürdigsten und hochgeborenen Fürsten und Herrn Abten des fürstlichen Stifts und Gotteshauses St. Gallen, unsers gnädigsten Fürsten und Herrn, Ich zu einem Vogt des heiligen Römischen Reiches gesetzt, auch . . . um kaiserlich Recht angerufen worden, und heutigten dato dazu allhier angesetzt hab: ob nicht Zeit und Ort dazu bequemlich, dass ich möge zu dem Schwert greifen, solches in meine Hand nehmen, mit den Urteilssprechern niedersitzen und richten, um das, so vor uns gebracht wird, nach kaiserlichen und des heiligen römischen Reichs Rechten?* Quoted Marquardt (1999: 144) from a source of 1801.

The passage makes clear that Saint Gall, an associated but important member of the Swiss Confederation, was unconcerned with the notion of sovereignty as it is nowadays understood—happy to emphasize that both its jurisdiction and its legal order derived from an 'outside' power (although, of course, the clear distinction of inside and outside is itself only really possible in the case of today's state; conversely the fact that this distinction is here muddled is typical of the *ancien régime*). The town (as opposed to the abbey) of Saint Gall likewise emphasized its continuing association with the empire by using the imperial insignia (the imperial crown and the double-headed eagle) in its coat of arms until at least 1798.[341]

The constitutional organization of the Confederation was unsystematic in the extreme: here, too, there was no general legal order binding on all, but only individual rights and privileges of the various units making up the Confederation. Thus, regarding the terms of their membership no associated member was quite like the other. Protestant Mülhausen was associated (*zugewandt*) only with the protestant cantons. The catholic prince-bishop of Basel—who at the same time remained a prince of the empire and unlike the abbot of Saint Gall was also represented in the *Reichstag*—was only associated with the catholic cantons; at the same time the city of Basel was itself one of the protestant cantons. The dependent territories (such as the Aargau, the Thurgau, Locarno, or Lugano) were not administered by the Confederation as such, but by 'consortia' of cantons that included different cantons in the case of each of those territories; those cross-cutting 'consortia' were an important bond ensuring the cohesion of the Confederation.

Although they had no automatic right of representation, certain important associated members nevertheless routinely voted in the *Tagsatzung*—such as, in the eighteenth century, the abbot of Saint Gall, or the town of Biel: technically part of the territory of the catholic prince-bishop of Basel (associated, as we saw, with the catholic cantons), protestant Biel was itself one of the associated members while still remaining, in some sense, part of the dominions of the prince-bishop—just as Saint Gall in some sense remained part of the empire even as it played an important role in the Confederation, or as the prince-bishop continued to be represented in the *Reichstag* as well. The dominions of the prince-bishop in fact furnish another nice example of *ancien régime* complexity. Parts of the episcopal territory were *verburgrechtet* with members of the Confederation (associate or full: Berne, Solothurn, Biel), meaning that they had the *Burgrecht* (a period Swiss term for citizenship) of those places—it was a Swiss particularity that municipalities would grant their citizenship to outsiders (individuals, such as local noblemen, or corporations, such as other municipalities) as a way of establishing formal ties with those outsiders. Those parts of the episcopal lands that were *verburgrechtet* in this way were held to be Confederation territory, whereas the rest was considered to belong to the Holy Roman Empire—even though, of course, those were not totally exclusive categories.[342]

The emperor himself (or, to be exact, the house of Habsburg) held territory in Switzerland. The lordship of Tarasp, entirely surrounded by territory belonging to the Grey Leagues, was held by the emperor until he passed it on to the Dietrichstein family in 1684; despite its location it legally remained part of the empire rather than the Confederation until 1803. However, there were also Habsburg possessions *within* the territory of the Grey Leagues—such as the lordship of the Münstertal (Münster valley),

[341] Marquart (1999: 438 n. 2334).
[342] Staehelin (1991: 65); *Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz*, 'Burgrecht'.

which its inhabitants purchased in 1748/62 (the inhabitants of a lordship buying out the lord was not so unusual), or the lordship of Rhäzüns (which had been pawned but was redeemed by the emperor in 1696 and kept throughout the eighteenth century).[343]

The Confederation was even less centralized than the empire. As in the empire, there was no central government. Nevertheless, the system worked—despite occasional domestic violence, like the peasants' rising in Berne, Lucerne, and Solothurn in 1653, the so-called Villmerg War of 1656, the Toggenburg (or Second Villmerg) War of 1712 (in whose long preparatory phase abbot Leodegar Bürgisser of Saint Gall cancelled his treaty with the Confederation and concluded an alliance with the emperor instead), or the protracted constitutional quarrel in Geneva culminating, in 1782, in the occupation of the city by troops from Berne—in conjunction with troops from France and Savoy—in order to dismantle a new, more broadly-based regime that had been installed there. Note that such conflicts did not involve the Confederation as a whole.

The seven northern provinces of the Low Countries, united in the Utrecht union of 1579, rebelled against Spanish rule even as many of the inhabitants remained staunchly loyal to the Spanish crown, blaming the need to fight on evil advisers. The uprising was not fuelled by any sort of republicanism or nationalism; thus, somewhat surprisingly from today's perspective, the opening stanza of the sixteenth-century *Wilhelmus*, the song about the leader of the anti-Spanish rebellion William of Nassau that now serves as the Dutch national anthem, has him proudly declare both his 'German blood' and his unswerving loyalty to the king of Spain. With that loyalty sadly unrequited, the Dutch would have given their allegiance to some other crown instead of the Spanish crown, but could not find one that wanted them: both Henry III of France and Elizabeth I of England declined the offer. They thus became a republic originally without wanting to. But as a result, they illustrate (as does the Swiss Confederation) how little the social structures of the *ancien régime* were in need of a crown. That fact, in turn, left kings free to devote a great deal of their resources, not needed actually to run their dominions, to foreign policy and indeed foreign warfare.

Everywhere in *ancien régime* Europe, even in seemingly 'absolutist' monarchies like France or Brandenburg-Prussia, the crown was in some manner or other faced with estates in its dominions. Yet whereas the crown could not have survived without the support of the estates, conversely the estates were easily capable of dispensing with the crown. In the Dutch case, the whole apparatus of local and regional communities (*consociationes*) placed beside and above one another as depicted by Althusius (who based himself not least on the example of the northern Netherlands) simply continued to function after the authority of the Spanish crown over it had been removed: the towns and local lordships, the provincial estates (*staten-provinciaal*), the States General (*staten-generaal*). Here, too, as in the Swiss Confederation, we find the phenomenon of subject territories—in essence those portions of the southern provinces not part of the Utrecht union that were subsequently conquered by the northern provinces (Flanders north of the mouth of the Scheldt, north Brabant, north Limburg). Until the end of the *ancien régime*, they were administered under the joint authority of the States General (i.e. the estates of the union or confederation).

As in the Swiss case, there was no central government. Formally, the seven provinces were completely autonomous and not subject to any common authority. The union as

[343]Marquardt (1999: 351) (Münstertal), 342 (Rhäzüns).

such, embodied by the States General, was mainly responsible for foreign policy. It is true that the States General effectively resembled a government: they convened very frequently, often every day (in the Hague *Binnenhof*), and were a rather small group. Each of the seven provinces had a single vote in the assembly, so that seven delegates would have sufficed; the actual number of delegates present was usually between ten and twenty. Majority decisions were possible; in any case the largest of the provinces, Holland, had such preponderance in the union that the other provinces usually followed its lead. Unlike the Swiss Confederation, the United Provinces had other common institutions apart from the assembly of their delegates. They were of an administrative nature: the *raad van state* (council of state) was in charge of running the army, the common fortresses, and the dependent territories; the *rekenkamer* (audit chamber) was in charge of the common finances, and the *muntkamer* (mint chamber) supervised the monetary system of the union—the provinces minted their own coins, yet (unlike the Swiss Confederation) had a de facto currency union. The totality of those central administrations, established at The Hague, was referred to as the *generaliteit*.[344] ('Council of state' sounds like a reference to the 'state' in Hobbes' or our sense but really means 'royal council'; in the same manner, individual provinces and also the union as a whole often—not always—had *stadhouders*, literally 'stead-holders' or 'place-holders', so called because they represented—took the place of—the prince or king. In both instances the anachronistic retention of terms dating from the time when the seven provinces were still under the authority of the Spanish king shows once more that the union was not founded on any sort of anti-monarchical ideology.)

What enabled actors, royal or not, to take part in European politics was their recognition: recognition by each other, but also recognition by those under their authority. Contrary to the theory that, in the words of Charles Tilly, 'until recently only those states survived that held their own in war with other states,'[345] it was really because their continued existence did *not* depend on their ability to coerce either their subjects or their neighbours that *ancien régime* European actors were able to engage in war with each other in the first place. Subjects (or vassals) accepted the authority of the crown despite the fact that had they chosen not to do so the crown would have been unable to overcome the resistance of more than a few of them; nor need a crown fear that, even if it lost a foreign war, the penalty would be any worse than having to cede some peripheral territory or dominions. But it could invest massive resources in foreign warfare—in fortifications, navies, and armies—precisely because those resources were not needed domestically. Louis XIV had up to half a million soldiers to make war for him abroad, but made do with 2,000 *gendarmes* to assert a token sovereignty domestically. He could do this because he was not needed to maintain order within France, any more than the United Provinces, or the Swiss Confederation, needed a king, or indeed any sort of central executive, to maintain order among their inhabitants. Much of that part of the annual budget of the French crown that did not go into financing the military served to pay for the royal court. Very little went into financing the central administration of the kingdom of France, quite simply because that existed only in the most inchoate fashion.

An expert on the period, M. S. Anderson, has this to say on 'government and administration' (the heading of the relevant chapter) in the late *ancien régime*:

[344] Israel (1998: esp. 291–7); *Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz*, 'Geld'.
[345] Tilly (1990: 63).

During the eighteenth century few European States possessed efficient administrations. For this inefficiency there were several reasons. The governmental machines of the period were defective because nearly all of them were operated, to varying extents, by men who were not professional administrators: nearly all of them depended on the help of unofficial or semi-official bodies of various kinds. Moreover the officials whom they employed, as well as being often few in numbers, were as a rule inadequately trained and often poorly and irregularly paid. Most important of all, they were faced almost everywhere by a complex array of traditional institutions, often with deep historic roots and able to call on considerable reserves of popular support in their own localities. These were almost always hostile to any concentration of power in the hands of a centrally controlled and efficiency-minded bureaucracy and distrustful of any move towards administrative rationality which seemed to threaten their own powers. The amateur and semi-official character of much eighteenth-century administration was bound up with the nature of society as an aggregate of traditional groupings and institutions. It seemed reasonable, and was often economical of money and effort, to allow groups and institutions of this kind not merely a high degree of autonomy in the regulation of their own internal affairs but also a large share in the execution of government policies which particularly concerned them.[346]

Anderson cites as an example the fact that the University of Paris was entrusted by the crown with the supervision of the French book trade, an arrangement formalized by a royal *arrêt* of 1725. Like any other *ancien régime* university the Sorbonne was an autonomous corporation: it had not been created by the crown, was not run by the crown, and far from receiving funds from the crown was actually, from 1695, obliged to pay the crown taxes.

The passage is remarkably judgemental: eighteenth-century European 'States' (with a capital S) were 'inefficient' (in comparison with what? with present-day 'states'? but *are* present-day states more efficient, just because their administrative apparatus are more elaborate? how can this efficiency be measured?). Their 'governmental machines' were 'defective' because they were insufficiently 'professional'—their staff small, badly trained (but how much training did they need?), and badly paid (this was partly because supra-local administrative resources were less vital to the functioning of *ancien régime* society and thus held in lower regard—witness Frederic II's reply to Carl von Siegroth—and partly because the staff was often made up of gentlemen expected to have an independent income in addition to their salary). Eighteenth-century administration was 'amateur' and 'semi-official'. To make up its shortcomings it relied on 'traditional institutions' distrustful of 'administrative rationality'.

This attitude is not entirely anachronistic in that it was in fact shared by many eighteenth-century reformers, enamoured with rationality and efficiency and distrustful of what was 'merely' the result of historical contingency: they were preparing the next 'transformation of the prevailing social episteme', and the upheaval triggered in 1789. Nevertheless it is one thing for contemporaries to be critical of their own age, and another for historians to adopt such a partisan perspective. Historians should primarily seek to understand the past as it was, rather than blame it for not having been something else. Anderson criticizes eighteenth-century society for having been too far removed from what we think 'states' should be. Psychologically, this is made easier,

[346] Anderson (1987: 124).

even, on the face of it, compelling by the fact that our notions of what 'states' should be are akin to, indeed linear descendants of, those held by reformist authors in the period itself: there is an ideological continuity here. It is also true that the ideology to which Anderson subconsciously subscribes is what brought the *ancien régime* down: it ultimately imploded because the discrepancy between what it was and what the elites of the late eighteenth/early nineteenth century—both revolutionary and conservative—wanted instead became unbridgeable. Nothing short of an earthquake could release the pent-up tectonic energy inherent in this situation.

But the fact that the ideology of the intellectual elites of the period is one still widely shared at present does not make it anything less of an ideology, or using it as a yardstick to judge historical phenomena by, any more permissible. In this sense, judging the late *ancien régime* from the point of view of enlightenment rationalism is like blaming sixteenth-century France for having been far removed from the kind of kingdom imagined by Jean Bodin, or seventeenth-century England for having been nothing like the commonwealth imagined by Thomas Hobbes. The social and political structures that still existed in the eighteenth century and which indeed, until the 1790s, very much dominated the scene, were not, as Anderson and many other present-day historians would have it, as yet imperfect states. They were something intrinsically different, a legacy of the past much more than anticipation of the age to come.

5

Conclusion

The preceding chapters were meant to make clear how little the structural characteristics of past epochs in the history of western civilization corresponded to today's ideas on 'normal' political organization. The assumption that such an archetype exists, an assumption implicit in the routine usage of the word 'state' regardless of the time or place under discussion, is wrong. The main objective of this study was to show that the now prevalent view of the state as a necessary framework for politics, indeed as indispensable for the functioning of society in 'advanced' cultures and thus as old as civilization itself, will not stand up to scrutiny. Rather, the present-day state is merely the latest product of the path-dependent succession of political structures unique to their period.

Once it has been understood that the concept of the state is unsuitable as an interpretive overlay to make sense of the history of western civilization, it becomes apparent that any attempt to interpret structural change in terms of the transformation of 'systems of states' must fall short, as will any endeavour to derive lessons about the intrinsic nature of 'international' politics from 'history'. To describe the interaction of autonomous political agents as the 'realm of recurrence and repetition', to take up Martin Wight's formulation of the 'immutability thesis' shared by much twentieth-century IR theory, is only possible if the real agents are replaced by 'states' existing in the eye of today's beholder; they are put there by historians applying present-day political terminology to past political structures, thereby unwittingly reshaping them. In other words, the 'immutability thesis' works by substituting a projection for historical reality. If no change is then perceived, that is simply because the projection is static rather than animated.

I contend that the path-dependent, historically contingent nature of political structures and their evolution renders the hope of nomothetic political theory groundless. The persistent failure or inadequacy of 'grand theory' in IR has often been remarked on, but the underlying cause has not been recognized—because of the illusion created by the present-day discourse of eternity that politics expresses timeless patterns. In the final pages of this book, I propose briefly to recapitulate some major aspects of structural change highlighted in this study to show how they must by their nature defy attempts at

nomothetic theory. But if this is so, then there can be no 'grand theory' of present-day international relations, either.

Looking at the process of the supersession of the small-scale early Greek kingship by the *pólis* and then of the superimposition on the *pólis*-world of the new, large-scale post-Persian Greek kingship, the role of contingent, historically unique factors is striking. So is the inadequacy of existing theoretical approaches to the problem of structural change, such as Robert Gilpin's notion of change being the result of 'hegemonial war' or Paul Kennedy's idea that 'great powers' decline because of imperial overstretch. Nor is there any congruence, or even compatibility, between this particular concrete process of structural change and Kenneth Waltz's notion that, regardless of the domestic setup or evolution of the actors of which it is composed, an 'anarchical' system will invariably socialize those actors into certain timeless patterns of behaviour, more particularly into balancing—by forming alliances—against actors threatening to become preponderant (Waltz's theory is not concerned with structural change, but does claim timeless validity for its 'structural' 'realism' and thus should be applicable to the historical evidence).[1]

According to Gilpin's theory, the uneven development of competing 'states' causes recurrent realignments of the distribution of power by means of a great war in which rising states break the dominance of declining states, only later to suffer the same fate themselves. Kennedy's theory posits that any hegemony will tend to overstretch its resources in the course of its expansion, thereby initiating its downfall. As Waltz's theory would have it, a system with two 'great powers' balancing each other will be most stable and a system with three great powers will be least stable, with a system featuring more than three great powers in between—independent of any domestic particularities of the 'great powers' in question. This kind of thinking, which assumes the actors to be essentially similar in any age and ascribes to them a striving for dominance and expansion, is incapable of explaining the structural change in question. This is not least because its fixation on 'states' prevents it from seeing what is actually the most important aspect of this change; the way *different-type* actors or forms of organization succeed each other but also, for example in the case of the *pólis* and post-Persian kingship, coexist, indeed coexist symbiotically. (In fact, only Gilpin's work discusses the Greek world at some length, while Waltz's merely alludes to it; Kennedy's book only deals with the period after 1500 CE.) But the cited approaches—well-known and used by way of example, though I am not aware of that many more that *could* be adduced—do not even fit the evidence during stretches of time where the character of the actors remained basically constant, like the *pólis*-world in the century or so before the coming of the Persians.

If we simply speak of Greek city-'states' without enquiring what may have made them unique in terms of their organization, we cannot but overlook what I have proposed is the major reason why the *pólis* was as 'territorially unelastic' as, throughout much of the history of the old Mediterranean world, it was irrepressible. The emergence of the 'classical' *pólis* was helped by a novel type of writing system combining unprecedented simplicity and efficiency, and by a novel form of combat, the hoplite phalanx. They made possible (even if they may not explain exhaustively) the development of a relatively egalitarian model of political organization, based not on subjection but taking the form of a cooperative. This was a world of low-technology warfare; moreover, in the Greek world, the lack of dependence on shared infrastructure (and thus of a civilizational

[1] Gilpin (1981, 1991); Kennedy (1988); Waltz (1979).

'cage') hindered the emergence of the kind of strong, potentially supralocal kingship found for example in the Middle East. In this specific environment, the hoplite phalanx enabled any bunch even of modest farmers to hold their own in battle against just about anyone (including each other). This made the *pólis* viable; at the same time its specific organization kept it small and the Greek world as a whole, atomistic. An association of landowners defending a monopoly on the possession of real estate in their territory, the *pólis* could not expand beyond a certain size without giving up the collective decision-making and distaste for personal rule (as opposed to the rule of written law) that were its hallmark.

With the *pólis* already well established but no major outside player giving cause for concern, sixth-century Greece was structurally quite stable despite a great deal of (mostly petty) warfare and a very unequal distribution of capabilities. One *pólis*, Lakedaímôn, was markedly stronger than the rest: this was a 'unipolar' system, whose stability could not be based on balancing behaviour. Yet what gave the Lakedaimonians preponderance, their specific social organization with its premium on military preparedness and their cordon sanitaire of allies, resulted from a domestic factor, the need to keep the heilots under control; the same factor caused them to wield their power cautiously and to shun further expansion. Contrary to what Waltz's theory posits, the 'foreign'-political behaviour of the Lakedaimonians (to the extent that anybody in the Greek world could really be 'foreign') was thus determined at the domestic level, not the level of the system. Conversely, other actors do not appear to have been worried about the preponderance of the Lakedaimonians, or indeed about preponderance in general.

Thus, after the Persians had conquered the empire of the Lydians, the Athenians at first sought an alliance with them, with a view, indeed, to protecting themselves, more specifically their new political system, from intervention by the Lakedaimonians. Yet from an equilibrist viewpoint it was an odd strategy to seek the support of a player far stronger, on the face of it and indeed no doubt in contemporary perception, than Athenians and Lakedaimonians combined. Similarly, after the failure of the proposed alliance, the Athenians proceeded to *attack* the Persians, without previously securing the support of any other significant actors. In a world conforming to Waltz's theory, they should have failed, and (assuming that they survived the episode in the first place) thereby been socialized into not behaving so stupidly again. In fact, their curiously reckless decision ultimately left the Athenians in a position where they themselves had preponderance over the Aegean and the lands bordering on it—a striking illustration of the law of unintended consequences.

Contrary to Gilpin's or Kennedy's approach, the rise of the Athenians had nothing to do with the decline of other actors. It left both the Lakedaimonians and the Persians with the same resources as before—even if we allow that their relative position was affected, their domestic strength was not affected. Where before there had been only one dominant player affecting the Greek world, the Lakedaimonians, now we find three (the Persians played no role in the eastern Mediterranean until after their conquest of the empire of the Lydians in 546, from which point onwards they began to expand in the region). As it turned out, there was, in fact, room for all of them—with the Athenians, curiously, the most aggressive even though their position was perhaps the shakiest.

They were a populous community (with only the Lakedaimonians similarly populous in Greece), and they had rich silver mines. But this would not have been enough had they not simply been lucky in a manner that no general theory of 'international politics'

can accommodate. Both their victory over the Persians at Marathón in 490 and the one at Plataiaí of 479 were near shaves; either battle might easily have gone the other way. It was also fortuitous that, in order to hold their own against the Persians, the Athenians were forced to acquire a fleet—for which at first they showed very little enthusiasm. It was only once they had it that they discovered that this enabled them not only to keep off the Persians, but to control and exploit their fellow-Greeks in the Aegean. But this was only possible because, first, the Lakedaimonians in view of their domestic situation refused to invest resources in the Aegean and act as its protector against the Persians, and second because, by its geographical nature, the area that thus came under the influence of the Athenians instead *could* be controlled by means of a fleet—as a landlocked empire could not have been. A fleet, paid for by unwilling subjects, could not easily be used against its masters or defect (despite their numbers rowers were relatively harmless in themselves and relatively easy to control), whereas troops—whether press-ganged or made up of mercenaries—would have been far less reliable.

The new preponderance of the Athenians was well established by the mid-fifth century; if anything, their relative position in the Mediterranean world deteriorated somewhat in the following two decades. The war of 431 did not break out because of any shift in the distribution of capabilities, nor were the Lakedaimonians trying to prevent such a shift (it was a bit late for that). Rather, what brought about the war was the bipolarization of Greece on the one hand (this meant that minor, local crises involving lesser actors like Corinth, Kérkyra, Mégara, or Poteídaia necessarily affected relations between the two blocs as a whole) and, on the other hand, the fact that the Athenians had become so distrusted and hated (rather than merely so preponderant) in Greece that peaceful settlement of those disputes was no longer an option—this being the 'truest cause' of the war identified by Thukydídês.

In Gilpin's opinion, the Lakedaimonians, in 431, wanted to eliminate the Athenians, more innovative and dynamic than they, while they still had the means to do so; for him the object of the war was 'hegemony over Hellas'.[2] Yet in 479, the Lakedaimonians could have had that hegemony without war against the Athenians. Instead, they withdrew to the Peloponnese, their old sphere of influence, for essentially the same reason that they went to war in 431: the fear of a rising of the heilots. We saw how in the 460s such a rising proved hard to suppress, and that the Lakedaimonians suspected that their ostensible allies, the Athenians, might in fact abet the insurgents; as a result, they sent the Athenians home again, a major éclat. In 431, they overcame their reluctance to go to war out of concern for their alliance system, that cordon sanitaire designed to prevent outside adversaries from joining forces with the heilots (as the Thebans eventually did in 371 with disastrous effect). The Lakedaimonians feared that this alliance system would unravel if they failed to assist disgruntled clients like Corinth and Mégara against the overbearing Athenians.

In 404, it was all over, the empire of the Athenians gone. Imperial overstretch? Hegemonial war? Balancing against the Athenians? But if Waltz's theory is right, with Greece turned into a system of two great powers should not this set-up have been stable, instead of collapsing completely after a mere two or three generations? (It did, to be sure, last a little longer than the bipolar system of the second half of the twentieth century, which Waltz's book of 1979 predicted was there to stay.) But none of the above is

[2]Gilpin (1981: 64, 96, 191, 199–200), quotation at p. 199.

applicable at all. It is true that by—recklessly, again—attacking Syracuse, in the context of enmity towards them of both the Peloponnesians and many of their own subjects, the Athenians overstretched their resources and supply lines dangerously. However, their real problem was not any lack of resources but the way they obtained them; in other words, the construction of their empire—a 'domestic' factor, again.

The empire of the Athenians was based on coercion. Extracting resources by coercion was both relatively inefficient—because a fairly high share of those resources was used up in the process—and dangerous because of the hostility that it generated, making the empire prone to unravel when the imperial power faced a major crisis. The Romans, with an empire based to a considerable extent on acceptance rather than coercion, suffered comparable setbacks (Cannae) and yet found their empire stable. It is true that the empire of the Athenians came to an end not because of large-scale defection of the subjects but because of the defeat of the Athenians themselves and the capture of their city by the Peloponnesians, and that, had Hannibal captured Rome as he seemed poised to, the Romans probably would have lost their empire, too. Yet although, again, the outcome was partly contingent in both instances, the greater resilience of the empire of the Romans certainly helped.

We saw in Chapter 2 that pre-christian Greek and Roman thinkers ascribed little military importance to material resources. The reason for this was not least simply that in contrast with the *ancien régime*, both more monetized (with a supralocal system of credit and thus a far greater monetary mass) and more advanced technologically, in the pre-christian Mediterranean world it was not possible to buy much military power—this being the kind of fundamental difference between epochs overlooked or ignored by those who take politics among 'states' to be characterized by 'recurrence and repetition'. Everybody disposed of the same, relatively simple weapons and other equipment. Victory indeed went to those who were better organized, not to those who were richer. That is true already of the period when the *pólis* first evolved: the hoplite phalanx did not require massive resources and yet in a low-technology environment was very effective.

What triggered a dramatic transformation of the intrinsically rather stable *pólis*-world of the sixth century was a fortuitous exogenous shock: the threat posed by the Persians. It forced those who opposed it into coalitions and large-scale warfare—at first to fend off this threat, but, with large coalitions once in place, against each other as well. The resulting intensification of warfare, its greater dimensions, more professional character, and increased reliance on mercenaries favoured the rise of kings. In the absence of gunpowder, navies could do only limited damage, unable in particular to attack targets on land. Triremes were useful to the Athenians in the specific geographical circumstances of the Aegean, but this was a special case. Mercenaries were a more versatile asset.

Yet mercenaries were not congenial to a cooperative form of political organization. With too many mercenaries in a *pólis*, some rich individual could easily usurp power there, as indeed happened in some instances. Kings, by contrast, being sole in power already, need not fear this, and on the contrary were more secure the more mercenaries they had. Used judiciously, mercenaries paid for themselves since they enabled kings to exploit the resources of a large territory. The rise of kings did not, however, spell the end of the *pólis*. Rather than replace it, the supralocal rule of the post-Persian Greek kings took advantage of the *pólis*, adapting itself to it and even promoting it. Since, unlike the Roman empire with its Roman citizenship, those kings had nothing else on which to build their rule administratively, they left the *pólis* essentially untouched, complete

with the rivalry that set it apart from its neighbours and which strengthened its internal cohesion. As we saw, those kings actually promoted inter-*pólis* competition (for their attention and munificence) in their spheres of influence as a way of stabilizing their rule.

The disadvantage of this technique was that their spheres of influence never acquired any internal cohesion of their own the way the empire of the Romans did. If the post-Persian kings found themselves inferior to the Romans despite being much richer, the reason was again organizational rather than to do with material resources. As Seneca aptly observes, wealth was what the Romans found among those they conquered. The Romans succeeded because of the specific construction of their own commonwealth and of their wider area of influence or empire, which meant that manpower was never a problem. Although not subject to the same constraints as a *pólis*, even kings could not enlarge their armies at will. Professional standing armies—as those of the Romans were not—posed logistical problems that no doubt tended to limit their size; nor, presumably, could they be expanded quickly. Conceivably it was this that enabled Alexander to conquer the empire of the Persians, whose ruler was no doubt far richer than anyone in Greece or Macedon. The Romans, on the other hand, usually had more recruits than they needed, as shown by their ability to more than double their troops following Cannae despite their massive losses in a string of military disasters. Their empire unfolded not because they always prevailed on the battlefield, but because they could go on being defeated for a long time and still come back with more soldiers, recruited from among their own huge (and growing) citizenship and their many loyal allies. The Greek kings in the east, Pýrrhos ('another victory over the Romans and we are finished'), or Hannibal could not.

In the view of people at the time, wealth was not only not a precondition of military success but even harmful, a notion found in Greek authors like Isokrátês as well as pre-christian Roman authors like Sallust or Seneca and even in late Roman christian authors. Thus, Augustine in the early fifth century counters the charge that the spread of christianity was responsible for the decay of the Roman empire by laying the blame for this decadence on the self-indulgent way of life of his non-christian fellow citizens, with copious references to pre-christian figures like, precisely, Sallust. Augustine may well have believed in the truth of what he wrote, but whether that was so or not it was a clever strategy to hit critics of christianity with the very heritage which they claimed the new religion to be betraying.[3] Another christian writer, Salvian of Marseille (∼400–∼468/70), did much the same in his treatise *On the governance of god*:

> Nothing is left us of the former peace and prosperity but the excesses because of which that prosperity is no more. Where is the wealth and prestige of the Romans of old? The Romans once were the bravest of men; now their strength has left them. The Romans of old were feared; now it is we who fear. They imposed tribute on the barbarian peoples; we pay tribute to them.[4]

Why did god allow that? Because, Salvian informed his audience, the 'barbarian' peoples still had a modest lifestyle, whereas the Romans only sought their own pleasure. Salvian does not hesitate to criticize even the church, which, since it had ceased to be persecuted,

[3] Aurelius Augustinus, *De civitate Dei*, e.g. 1.30–3, 2.18–19, 3.17.

[4] *Nihil nobis de pace et prosperitate pristina reliquum est nisi sola omnino crimina, quae prosperitatem non esse fecerunt. Ubi namque sunt antiquae Romanorum opes ac dignitates? Fortissimi quondam Romani erant, nunc sine viribus: timebantur Romani veteres, nos timemus: vectigalia illis solvebant populis barbarorum, nos vectigales barbaris sumus.* Salvian, *De gubernatione Dei* 6.98.

had according to him become slothful and was no great help in the effort to combat hedonism and vice.[5]

Salvian alludes to a remarkable phenomenon: whereas the Romans of an earlier age had successfully overcome invaders like the Gauls in the fourth-century BCE, Pýrrhos and Hannibal in the third, or the Cimbri and Teutons in the second, the Romans of the fifth-century CE no longer managed to hold their own against 'barbarian' peoples even though their collective wealth was immensely greater. As indeed was their number: the 'barbarian hordes' were not in fact very large. It has been estimated that the western empire, with a population of some thirty million, faced no more than about a million 'barbarian' migrants, who in addition were no united force and did not of course arrive all at the same time. Three or four per cent migrants is less than the percentage currently found in most countries of the European Union—in the case in particular of Germany, a lot less.[6]

However, Roman soldiers (and their equipment, and the military infrastructure) now cost money; 'barbarian' fighters were either paid by the Roman authorities (to fight for the empire, or else to not fight against it), or fought for booty, or land. They must often have been eager. Roman soldiers had no reason to be: their predecessors in the days of Roman expansion had fought adversaries richer than themselves like the 'barbarian' peoples did now, whereas in the conditions of the early christian period Roman soldiers risked their lives without much hope of booty. If this situation qualifies as imperial overstretch, still it is hard to see how it could have been avoided; again, it is really the result of unpredictable, path-dependent contingency.

The intensification of the 'barbarian' threat resulted from the coincidence and cumulative interaction, in the third-century CE, of domestic turmoil within the empire, the arrival of a new and aggressive competitor in the guise of the Sasanians in the Middle East, and the structural inability, *caused* by the empire, of the municipalities on which the empire rested administratively to shoulder collectively stresses that before, when they were still autarchic, they had coped with individually; this development could not possibly have been foreseen or forestalled. Nor could the arrival (in the second half of the fourth century) of the Huns from inner Asia, which both posed a threat in itself and caused other 'barbarian' peoples like the Goths to seek refuge in the empire, or the sudden uniting of the Arabs, long a factor but never as yet an important force, in the name of an aggressive new religion in the seventh century.

'Hegemonial' war was certainly engaged in by Constantinople and Ktêsiphôn (the capital of the Sasanians)—on and off for 400 years. But instead of producing a new hegemony (or indeed much structural change of any kind: this particular bipolar set-up proved very stable indeed), in the end it merely made things easier for the Arabs. Meanwhile, no 'hegemonial' war could be waged against the 'barbarian' threat, which was not the least factor rendering that threat so dangerous. It is not at all clear, either, who could profitably have engaged in any balancing here. It was common to play actors against each other. For example, Anastásios, in power in Constantinople in the early sixth century, played Arabs against Ktêsiphôn, encouraging them to raid the territory of

[5]Salvian, *Ad ecclesiam* 1.4–5, 4.34; *De gubernatione Dei* 3.20ff.

[6]Fossier (1991: 21). Germany has about 9 per cent 'foreigners', France 6 per cent, Great Britain 4 per cent, with the EU average about 5.5 per cent; this does not include members of ethnic minorities that have acquired the citizenship of the host country.

the Sasanians, and played Chlodovech against Theoderic; later, the Ostrogoths formed some kind of alliance with the Sasanians against Anastásios' successor Justinian when he reconquered Italy. But the structural effect of such combinations was quite negligible. The two major players were and remained formidable enough to wage war on more than one front. Thus, Anastásios had a considerable number of troops operating in the Balkans at the same time as he was defending himself (successfully, if only after initial setbacks) against a major offensive of the Sasanians, the first for over half a century.

Divided, those troops in the Balkans managed to get themselves beaten in separate encounters by a local chief supported by troops of Theoderic. This clash between Anastásios' forces and those of Theoderic is quite mysterious (as mentioned, it may have been the unintended result of an attempt by Constantinople to keep the strategic town of Sirmium in the hands of the Germanic Gepids, who were hostile to Theoderic), but Anastásios was safe in the knowledge that because of his precarious legitimacy Theoderic could never attack him directly. We have seen how concerned Odoacar, Theoderic, and subsequent Amal rulers in Ravenna were not to let relations with Constantinople deteriorate too much despite constant friction, the source of which was Constantinople much more than they—thus, Theoderic must have been furious at support for his old enemies the Gepids from Constantinople; similarly, already Anastásios' predecessor Zḗnôn had set the Germanic Rugi on Odoacar. The problem for both Odoacar and Theoderic was that to maintain their control over Italy they had to have the support, or at least the toleration, both of Constantinople and of the 'Roman' senatorial elite in Italy itself, which, luckily for them, was irritated at Constantinople taking the position of Rome. At the same time, this senatorial elite had not quite made up its mind whether it really preferred the 'barbarian' rulers now in power in Ravenna—but was happy, in the meantime, to see if it could extract favours from them.

There was a sort of triangular game going on here between the new German rulers of Italy, the senatorial elite in Italy ('Rome', as it were, though the senators did not necessarily reside in that city itself), and Constantinople. We have seen, in the letter that Theoderic addressed to Anastásios to seek to restore good relations with him, how he oscillates between treating his own sphere of influence as separate from that of Constantinople and treating both as still part of the single Roman empire; the senatorial elite in Italy somehow sat astride this not very clear-cut divide (an important but non-territorial divide). 'Domestic' factors—to the extent that this term can be applied to a situation which actually was characterized by the lack of a clear 'inside/outside-construction', to borrow the expression of Buzan and Little—governed the relations between Ravenna and Constantinople, autonomous players though both were. Issues like the 'constitutional' standing and legitimacy of the rulers in Ravenna took precedence over, and indeed strongly influenced, military factors. Evidently, no IR theory predicated on the existence of bounded entities (not to mention 'like units' *à la* Waltz) can deal with this kind of situation.

The same type of historically unique 'internal' set-up favoured the rise of Chlodovech and the kingship of the Franks that he founded, and which was to prove of major importance for the history of Latin christendom. The Goths, one branch of whom (the Visigoths) in the fifth century controlled much of Gaul, were adherents of arian christianity, but their 'Roman' subjects were 'orthodox' (believers in the trinity, in conformity with the teachings of the 'official' church). Chlodovech, a new convert to christianity from what were clearly tactical considerations (certainly this brutal and

treacherous character seems an unlikely devotee of Jesus Christ), chose orthodoxy over arianism because that endeared him both to Constantinople and to the Roman elite in Gaul, which furnished the local bishops, key figures, administratively and politically, at this time.

Without Chlodovech no Frankish kingship, no 'Charlemagne', no re-establishment of the western imperial dignity, no spreading, through all of christendom, of the practice of unction and of the notion that kings were the 'lord's anointed' (surely it is hard to envisage those things coming about as a result of abstract, impersonal factors)—although, of course, Chlodovech could foresee none of this. The element of contingency, of the major impact of an outstanding personality in a structurally unsettled situation, is very palpable here. Similarly, it might be argued that if Anastásios refrained from attacking Theoderic to recover Italy, it was due to impersonal factors, specifically because such an endeavour would have made him more vulnerable to attack by the Sasanians; this may well be right. Yet a generation later, with the overall situation still the same, Justinian reconquered Italy anyway, even though indeed the Sasanians attacked—so much for balance of power theory being any guide to either the behaviour of 'states' or the structural evolution of an 'international system'. It is hard to avoid the impression that the main difference here—and, in this instance, the main reason for major structural change—was, again, personality (though the fact that the German kings in the west never acquired any real legitimacy in the eyes of Constantinople no doubt played an important role, too).

Anastásios, who never started a major war himself, had no military background. A senior bureaucrat, he came to power in his early 60s, largely due to the benevolence of the widow of his predecessor Zḗnôn (he married her after his accession). Anything but flamboyant, a good housekeeper, Anastásios reformed the tax system and the monetary system—the latter by increasing the circulation of copper coinage, which stimulated trade and the crafts; he managed to fill the treasury even as he lowered taxes. By contrast, Justinian was a military officer, if without experience in the field, who came to the throne in his mid-40s. A sheperd's son married to a bearkeeper's daughter (a strong-willed, intelligent woman with a well-known, or certainly much talked-about, past as a performer and courtesan), he was not only flamboyant but a megalomaniac, as documented to this day by his buildings—best-known among them the Hagía Sophía, whose utter enormity has to be experienced first-hand to be believed. Perhaps the last of the Roman rulers to be a native Latin speaker (which in the city of Constantinople made him part of a minority, a cultural diaspora), he seems also to have been something of a Latin nationalist, as indicated by his giant compilation of Roman law (perhaps his most influential legacy), or indeed his reconquest of the west. Another theory is that he and his wife, notorious for their insistence on elaborate court ceremonial that saw even the highest dignitaries grovel before the ruling couple, used display behaviour to overcompensate their low origin and the latent disdain of the established elite of the capital.

If despite its re-expansion under Justinian the Roman empire continued to lead a somewhat precarious existence, it was because—path-dependence!—there was no going back to the situation that had enabled it to grow in the first place: autarchic towns (or other, comparable social units) and a huge, cheap militia, recruited from people unaccustomed to any great luxury or even comfort but who, to the extent that they were Roman citizens, had a political stake in the Roman commonwealth. They were, after all, entitled to at least a token participation for example in the election of its officials; and they could feel superior to those not Roman citizens—a more numerous group, but, unlike

the Roman citizens, an ununited one. The fact that the Roman empire had citizens, a whole population with a personal stake in this empire, is another ('domestic' if non-territorial) factor setting it apart from the post-Persian Greek realms, but which will not show up in a Waltzian-type analysis limiting itself to the level of the 'system'. Yet it explains why, throughout its period of expansion, the Roman empire never had any serious competition, and why the Greek rulers never bothered to engage in any balancing against it. It also explains the most remarkable fact that it never had to deal with any serious secessionism.

Unfortunately for it, once both the empire and, within it, the number of Roman citizens had finished expanding, this edge could not be brought to bear any longer—domestically, with 'only' women and slaves left, no more people could be made citizens, a status that was devalued, almost meaningless anyway now that so many had it; while colonizing more 'barbarians' or conquering the empire of the Sasanians was too massive a task. Its ability to base supralocal rule on the creation of a supralocal community supporting it was what made Rome stronger than the post-Persian Greek kings, who lacked this ability. Yet in the long run, Rome paid a price for this advantage: the very success of the empire—and of the universal church that grew up within it—rendered the *pólis* (and its counterparts outside the Greek world) obsolete, weakening it and forcing the central power to manage badly what myriad local agents had previously been able to manage better.

By the middle of the first millennium, the local solidarity and internal cohesion of the municipalities had dissolved in the greater community of empire and church on which they now depended (as mentioned, the church played a major role not least in feeding the poor, as the *decuriones* had of old). The empire had a comparatively huge population, and if it had been possible to mobilize (and motivate) more of it, the 'barbarians' could have been kept at bay. But for as long as anyone could remember the empire had defended the masses; it could not now call on the masses to defend it. This was the more true as there no longer was even a semblance of popular participation in the running of the *res Romana*, the 'Roman commonwealth', as even the monocratic empire was still called, nor, given its size and the fact that practically the whole free male population now consisted of citizens, could there easily have been. At the same time, the empire, with its overwhelmingly agrarian economy and limited monetary mass, was not wealthy enough to pay soldiers so generously that recruitment and army size would not have been a problem.

Evidently, the empire of Rome (or Constantinople) and the loose 'tribal' units of the 'barbarians' (units which, as Herwig Wolfram has underlined, could form and reform quickly without much attention to actual ethnicity)[7] were no 'like units'. As seen from Constantinople, whose christian rulers were forever grappling with assaults from 'foreigners', mostly with a different religion and often organized loosely, 'tribally', this never really changed. This explains why, as we saw, a writer like Anna Komnênê could still, in the twelfth century, dismiss the 'Latins' (westerners) as 'barbarians' without a second thought. To us this may appear absurd, but at least it is probably no more so than the current tendency to see a 'system of states' wherever autonomous political actors interacted in the past—like Anna, present-day authors uncritically fall back on what they consider the default option for an 'anarchical' system.

[7] Wolfram (1998: esp. 32–3, 52ff.).

Barry Buzan and Richard Little, in their recent survey of 'international systems in world history', in fact abandon Waltz's notion of 'international' actors necessarily forming like units. Instead, they identify four types of actors: 'city-states, empires, nomadic and settled tribes', which, from a structural point of view, they stress were 'extremely dissimilar' in terms of internal organization.[8] They also stress that, unlike the kind of 'systems of states' with which IR theory usually deals, 'international systems' need not in fact have been 'anarchical' but were often hierarchical or hegemonial. Yet they see those different types or patterns as timeless, potentially possible in any age. They ignore the way the mutual relations of actors of different types (which they are too prone to regard as 'bounded entities', in their view the precondition for the existence of 'international relations') evolve in path-dependent fashion, bringing about structural phenomena unique to their period. In fact, Buzan and Little largely ignore the problem of structural change. Their tendency is to identify phenomena or categories and then assemble and compare instances across epochs and cultures.

Thus, Buzan and Little file today's Singapore, Kuwait, or Luxemburg under the same rubric of 'city-states' as the Athens of Perikĺes or the Italian 'city-states' of the pre-Reformation period.[9] This means worshipping categories over reality: today's Singapore is nothing like fifth-century BCE Athens. Nor is one empire like the next, especially if they are separated in time. Faced with similar challenges and able to influence each other, political structures that coexist in the same period may tend to resemble each other (though even this need not be so, or go only so far); but for political structures to resemble each other in different ages and cultures is intrinsically unlikely. Any claim to that kind of similarity should therefore be backed up (but virtually never is) in rigorous, methodologically self-conscious fashion. The effort this requires needs justification: why *should* political structures resemble each other across the ages? We should become more sensitive to the question why we apparently *want* this to be the case, and more diffident of our tendency to engage in wishful, or simply rash, thinking in this respect.

Neglect of structural particularities renders understanding structural change much more difficult—indeed, a predilection for abstract typology that sorts past political and social phenomena into catch-all categories is perhaps the single greatest impediment standing in the way of such an endeavour. Of course it is permissible, and sometimes convenient, to refer to structures by the same word even though they were quite different from each other—as I do in this chapter, too, in my usage notably of the term 'empire'. Yet this must not be allowed to disguise the structural uniqueness of those various instances, without which their evolution will remain mysterious.

How can we account for the history of political structures in the pre- and early christian Mediterranean if we do not see that the Athens of Perikĺes was not the same kind of commonwealth as Rome in the same period (to say nothing of twentieth-century Singapore), or if we do not see that the Roman empire differed from those of the Antigonids, Ptolemies, and Seleukids? In both instances, there were similarities (between those entities coexisting in—roughly—the same period, if hardly with present-day states), but for their long-term fate it is, as we saw, the dissimilarities that proved crucial. Thus,

[8] Buzan and Little (2000: 230).

[9] 'In the course of world history . . . city-states . . . have managed to survive as significant actors on the world scene, a handful persisting even to the present day' Buzan and Little (2000: 172). On the Italian 'city-states' ibid. p. 247; on Singapore etc. ibid. p. 266.

the Athenians, the Seleukids, and the Romans all established structures of supralocal rule. Simply calling all of them 'empire' without further analysis makes it that much more difficult to grasp why the empire of the Athenians was small and transitory, whereas that of the Seleukids was far more imposing and long-lived; in its turn the empire of the Romans easily outdid the empire of the Seleukids in terms both of its extent and its durability.

Without the universal Roman empire, the universal christian church could hardly have arisen. But, path-dependency once more, once established the church was viable without the empire. Whereas in the east the empire subsisted, in the west the church outlived it, finding new partners in the shape of (mostly) Germanic rulers that it took under its wings. If in rare instances they grew a bit more powerful than the church quite liked, nevertheless in a largely demonetized, largely illiterate environment the church for a long time was so indispensable for maintaining any sort of supralocal rule (weak as under the circumstances such rule necessarily was) as to retain an edge over secular power-holders, more dependent on it than the other way around. Again the result—plural secular realms coexisting on, and linked by, the same universal substrate, the church—was a structural phenomenon historically *sui generis*.

Nevertheless, of course structural change continued. We saw how, in Latin christendom, the warrior kingship of the first millennium with its relatively fluid realms gave way, from about the turn of the millennium onwards, to a more hieratic conception of kingship, a development that was part of a tendency towards more institutionalized forms of social organization. A general economic upswing no doubt played a role here, itself facilitated by the increasing amount of energy supplied by water mills. I know too little about how living conditions changed around this time, yet I have cited evidence suggesting a growing sophistication—notably the wholesale abandonment (even in the case of minor lords) of wooden castles, still prevalent in northern Europe in the eleventh century, in favour of stone castles, ubiquitous by the twelfth century and, as their remains still show, often anything but primitive. Unlike, perhaps, wooden castles (of which nothing remains, so it is hard to know), they usually could not be built relying on local materials and skills alone.

The economic upswing already in evidence here became very marked towards the end of the pre-Reformation period, fuelled by the rise of the towns—which eventually also provided administrative personnel that was relatively independent of the church. But as we saw, those were towns of a completely different type from their predecessors in the old Mediterranean world, dominated not by landowners but by craftsmen and traders, and based economically not on finite capital in the shape of agricultural land but on non-finite capital in the shape of goods, services, and funds (the latter to a large extent in the shape of credit rather than coin). This set-up of the new towns enabled an increasingly monetized (and, crucially, credit-based) economy to expand—a novel phenomenon with a huge impact on political structures, but easily overlooked if we simply assume 'towns', and trade, to have been more or less the same in any period.

As discussed, a demonetized economy favoured local power over centralized supralocal power because resources had mostly to be consumed where they were produced, either limiting power-holders to a relatively small area or forcing them to travel since resources could not be accumulated, let alone in one place. This explains, to a large extent, why the empire of Constantinople, with a monetized economy and a tax-based central power, could all at once be quite large, reasonably stable, and highly centralized, whereas the

Carolingian empire, also large, was ephemeral and not in fact very centralized, despite the fact that, as we saw, Charles I imitated Constantinople where he could. 'Our kingship is an imitation of yours, who are . . . the exemplar of the one empire', Theoderic wrote to Anastásios. Charles would never have adopted the submissive tone of that letter, preferring to challenge and provoke. He could afford that, because unlike Theoderic he was in no way dependent on Constantinople (which besides in his day was less formidable). Yet his fundamental attitude towards Constantinople was not so different from Theoderic's.

The Carolingian empire functioned while it was expanding, because the booty resulting from its conquests provided a strong incentive for magnates and lesser individuals to join the campaigns of the ruler, and support him generally. Yet when there were no more conquests, it fell apart. Whereas in the empire of Constantinople magnates were in the pay of the central power and thus depended on it, in the west magnates were largely autarchic. The central power might distribute land, but this then essentially remained in the hands of the magnates, leaving the crown weak. This is yet another example of how the same word ('empire') is routinely used to designate historical structures dissimilar in crucial respects.

On the other hand, it would be a mistake to consider a strong central power as indispensable in principle for ensuring the survival of political units, even units as large as the successor kingdoms of the Carolingian empire, the French, and the German. Certainly, in this particular (and also, of course, historically unique) situation, cohesion did not rely on coercion. We saw how both kingdoms retained a certain cohesion by virtue simply of being focused on the crown—legitimate because, in both instances, it was the prestigious 'Frankish' crown. (This 'Frankish' quality of the crown posed a bit of a problem in Germany, much of whose population was non-Frankish. Still insisted on in eleventh-century official discourse, the 'Frankish' character of the German crown nevertheless, and perhaps as a result of this problem, gave way to an emphasis on its 'imperial', 'Roman' character—which of course was also ultimately inherited from that best known of Frankish rulers, Charles I. The crown, in France and Germany, could not, all at once, have been prestigious, politically important, and (much of the time) weak in terms of coercive power had it been newly created. But it could be all those things as a path-dependent legacy of a glorious past, which benefited, furthermore, from the new trend towards sacral kingship.

Even though most land was in the hands of largely autonomous magnates, nevertheless those magnates had an interest in retaining the crown as an agency providing legitimation for the constant changes of possessions and status that, through marriage, inheritance, purchase, and indeed promotion by the crown, their mutual rivalry entailed. Of course they did not view the system in this kind of utilitarian light—it worked all the better because they did not, with the crown genuinely revered even as magnates happily pursued their private self-interest. A sense of ethnic unity also helped maintain the cohesion of kingdoms even in the absence of a strong central power. Magnates would tend to gravitate to the nearest crown speaking their own (vernacular) language because it was convenient, for their dealings with the crown as well as with each other. Linguistic community probably goes a long way towards explaining why, unlike the Carolingian empire in its entirety, the two realms into which it ultimately split proved stable: The western Franks lived among a Gallo-Roman majority whose language they came to adopt; the eastern Franks retained their language, but it was the same language as that of the other *gentes* in the eastern part of the old empire, notably the powerful Saxons.

The monetization of the economy of Latin christendom brought about by the rise of the new mercantile towns, and more particularly the fact that their mercantile activities led to the rise of a Europe-wide system of credit, made possible the re-emergence of the phenomenon of centralized supralocal power. Monetization allowed efficient taxation and the accumulation of resources in the hands of supralocal power-holders. The availability of credit, and of mechanized production processes made possible by the harnessing of water power and wind power, put at the disposal of strong power-holders military hardware—heavy ordnance, ramparts, and navies—incomparably more expensive (to obtain and to prevail against) than anything known in the pre-christian Mediterranean world or pre-Reformation christendom. By the same token, it put warfare out of reach again of smaller lords. (Even if gunpowder as such had been invented already in the Graeco-Roman world, it could not have had the same effect: we saw how the mass production of cannon balls presupposed blast furnaces, which in turn presupposed expertise in the exploitation of water power—wind power being too weak and unreliable for this; gunpowder production itself relied on water or wind-powered powder mills.)

That left the most important power-holders—generally of royal status—members of a select club of 'sovereign' actors capable of fighting each other. It is, however, important to realize that in late *ancien régime* Europe such actors could fight abroad essentially because they did not have to spend much of their resources on policing (or even defending) their own dominions, possession of which rested on mutual recognition (and recognition by the subjects) much more than on any defensive capacity. This was naturally somewhat less true of border territories; by contrast, it was very much true of the many small and weak political entities in Europe (among them, by the late *ancien régime*, kingdoms like Portugal, Denmark, Sweden, or the many principalities in Germany and Italy) which yet never suffered from attempts by the most powerful actors to absorb them by force.

Late *ancien régime* kingship centralized resources much more than it did administrative responsibilities. It did not have to run its dominions because society—made up of fairly autarchic 'corporations and communities' (*corps et communautés* in the expression of Roland Mousnier)—was still very much self-organizing. Those countless, mostly small-scale subunits did not need the crown, as shown by the fact that the Dutch and the Swiss managed perfectly well without one, indeed (especially in the Swiss case) without any central government at all. Local lords and corporations were prepared to recognize, support, indeed finance the crown, yet with the crown ultimately more dependent on them than the other way around administrative centralization would only go so far even in a *soi-disant* 'absolute monarchy' like the French kingdom.

Rather than owing its position to coercive power, the crown was itself an expression of a society founded on privilege, from the highest right down to the lowest echelons of the population. 'Administrative rationality'—of the kind which M. S. Anderson, quoted at the end of Chapter 4, found even the late *ancien régime* to be lacking in—presupposed a quasi-Hobbesian transfer to the 'sovereign' of the power that lesser lords and corporations wielded essentially in their own right, even though the crown or its apologists might pretend that it was delegated. But given how great the autonomy of those subunits still was even in the late eighteenth century, even in a country like France, or in the dominions collectively labelled 'Prussia', this transfer could only be had at the price of a revolution.

The French Revolution triggered a process that, as we saw, immediately resulted in efforts at centralization, and homogenization of their dominions, even by power-holders

ostensibly opposed to the events in France and the ideology underlying them. Similarly, in the nineteenth century, the populist, inclusive ideology of nationalism and political participation (even if largely symbolical) of the whole population in its '(nation) states' prevailed everywhere, whether in a 'revolutionary' or a 'conservative' guise. Helped by the onset of industrialization, which dissolved local economic circuits into much larger circuits (the 'national economy', indeed, soon, the 'global economy'), only now did political communities begin to depend on effective management by the central power, which made for very different political units from those of the *ancien régime*. Of course, in the nature of a path-dependent development, there is a certain amount of continuity between the new states and previous structures, overemphasized by popular accounts of their history. Yet states as they came into being in the nineteenth century are actors of a new type, never before seen in history (even as, of course, other, earlier structures had likewise been historically unique).

Their advent constitutes another fundamental structural change, though usually it is not even recognized. Once again, it had nothing to do with factors like imperial overstretch, hegemonial war, balancing, or the like—theoretical approaches to the problem of structural change predicated on the false notion that political units or actors are comparable across time. Perhaps the most remarkable constant concerning 'real' structural change in Europe over the last millennium is how little of it had to do with warfare, even though that might accompany, indeed be caused by, a paradigm shift. The shift itself seems to have been essentially a cultural phenomenon—'a transformation of the prevailing social episteme' in the words of John Ruggie—in all three major instances that occurred in Europe in the last thousand years: the shift from warrior kingship to sacral kingship early in the second millennium (though kings might still distinguish themselves as military leaders in the field for some time to come), the shift from the 'heteronomous', 'feudal' rule shared among a hierarchy of lords and communities towards an emphasis on 'sovereign' princely rule noticeable already in the fifteenth century (but which until the end of the *ancien régime* never quite eliminated the elements of 'heteronomy' or 'feudalism'), and the shift from the 'cult of the prince' to the 'nation states' dominant since the nineteenth century—by far the most dramatic shift, and the one responsible for the most violence.

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Authors of Latin christendom appear under the first name, not under what may look like a family name but often is not. For example Dante Alighieri is found under D, Giles of Rome under G, Nicholas of Kues (Nicholas Cusanus) under N.

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